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DISCOURSES

DELIVERED AT SEVERAL

MEETING HOUSES

OF THE PEOPLE CALLED

QUAKERS.

By the late SAMUEL FOTHERGILL.

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"These Discourses are suitable to the Character of a sensible Man; are enforced with some Warmth and Energy; and breathe a Spirit of Piety and Benevolence. The first Discourse is upon a Text extremely well suited to the Occasion of their yearly Meeting. In the second Sermon the Christian Principles of the Quakers are occasionally explained, and many pious Exhortations are given, which may be attended to with Advantage by Christians of every Denomination," &c. &c.

Critical and Monthly Reviews.



INTRODUCTION.

THE following pathetic and moving exhortations, were, as carefully as possible, taken down in characters, as they flowed from the lips of the preacher to large and crowded audiences; at which were present numbers of different persuasions: many of whom have requested copies of the transcript; and others have desired, in the strongest terms, that they might be made still more public, by means of the press.

AND as it is probable, that the prejudices which some have conceived against the faith and principles of the Quakers, (as a people separated from the established church,) may be removed, by a dispassionate perusal of these discourses, the Editor presumes this will be a reason, of itself sufficient, for their being made public.

INTRODUCTION.

The following picture and moving series of pictures were as carefully as possible taken down in shorthand as they passed from the lips of the preacher to large and crowded galleries, at which were present hundreds of children, and many of whom have been the subjects of special religious instruction since they have been in the land. This they might be made still more so, by means of the pictures.



And as it is probable that the pictures of which I have here been speaking the principles of the Quakers, (as a people separated from the established church) may be removed by a dispassionate counsel of their dissonance, the Editor prunes this will be a recognition of their ill-effects, for their being made public.

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*The following was delivered on First Day Morning,
the 17th of the Fifth Month, 1767, at the Fryers,
in Bristol.*

Art thou in health; my brother? †

IT hath been in my mind to adopt the language or salutation of Joab to Amasa; but with sentiments different, far different, from those which actuated the treachery of Joab; even those of true and tender affection, and with a mind replenished with that charity which wisheth well to all,

Art thou in health; my brother?

I could wish, with all possible solicitude, to lead every mind present, into the most careful inquiry, in respect to their spiritual state of health; and to their immediate relation and affinity to that supreme almighty Being, who is the just and awful judge of quick and dead. I fear it hath proceeded from too anxious a solicitude for the health of your bodies, and prosperity of your temporal concerns, that too many of you have too frequently, and in a manner totally, neglected the great concern of your immortal souls; which is indeed *the one thing needful*.

† 2 Sam. xx. 9.

Those

Those temporal concerns, I say, which are of a trifling perishing nature, have, I fear, interrupted and taken off from this principal concern; your anxiety and application towards the attainment of the treasures and the enjoyment of the pleasures of the world, have occasioned too great a neglect of your religious duty.

The conveniences of life are by no means a contemptible concern, where they are bounded with temperance, and confined within their proper channel: but as there is a part in us of infinitely greater, of no less than eternal moment; it also requires an attention proportionable to its proper worth; for what are temporal concerns, when compared with the important one of eternity!

The state of the body is subject to divers maladies; and when we have done our utmost to preserve it, we shall find in the end (and how soon that may be, none knows) that it is of necessity subject to the stroke of death, and to the inclosure of the grave.

I have therefore thought it by no means an improper inquiry for each individual to make, and deeply ponder, What is thy state, or how is it with thee, O my soul! who art capable of partaking of immortal joys, and destined to triumph over death and the grave? *When this earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved*, thy appointment and destination, if in proper soundness for it, shall be made perfect with the whole family of God, and be no longer subject to the diseases, pains, trials, and afflictions of this life, but
share

share the things which are of God, *With the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.**

As this is of the most infinite importance to the sons of men, I have thought it my particular duty, upon the present occasion, to put you in mind of the necessary inquiry into the state of your spiritual health; the condition of your immortal souls: being very apprehensive that all of you, my brethren, are not in perfect health, who have outwardly the appearance of health; but that, on the contrary, many are in a dangerous state of disease and stupefaction; have only preserved a lethargic frame, and are tottering upon the brink of destruction.

This inquiry into the present state of experience, and of advancement in the work of salvation, hath branched itself out in my view, and divided into several classes, those who are now within the audience of my voice. And, in the first place, I intreat the attention of you, the elders, amongst whom our LORD, as amongst so many shepherds, hath divided his flock; over whom you are appointed to watch, and to teach them to persevere in the path which leadeth to eternal life!

You have experienced the power of religion: you have *put on the armour of light;†* and ought to stand as guardian angels, and to call as the angel called, saying, *Come up hither, and I will shew thee the bride, the lamb's wife.‡*

* Heb. xii. 23.—† Rom. xiii. 12.—‡ Rev. xxi. 9.

Are you in health, my brethren?—Are you in health, my sisters?—Are you in health, my fellow-labourers in the Lord?—Are you in a lively active state in the cause of religion? in the cause of virtue and temperance? in the power of the gospel, as it is in Christ?

If those that have been called with an high and holy calling, as delegated shepherds under the one great Shepherd, walk uprightly in his fear and to his glory; then the sheep will with them be more likely to be gained upon to follow the great Shepherd; they will then have a frequent desire, a longing appetite after the divine Manna, which cometh down from God out of Heaven; for every life hath its food and its proper nutriment; and a soul panting after Heaven can be satisfied with nothing short of the food from Heaven.

In the next place, I address *you*, my brethren in the work of the ministry, reminding you of its divine institution; all that have entered rightly into it *being called of God, as was Aaron.*†

It is written, *he maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire;*‡ and though the term *angels* be generally understood of the glorified spirits in Heaven; yet, as it signifies *messengers*, it here seems to be applicable to those whom the Most High prepares and sends forth, to excite and enliven his militant church on earth.—*Are you in health, my brethren?*—It is the divine will that you be fed with celestial food; not with the unlawful things of

† Heb. v. 4.—‡ Psalm civ. 4.

the world, nor with the unlawful love of its lawful things; but that you become *as angels*, and *like his ministering spirits*, as a flame of fire. He will make you, if with due constancy ye adhere to, and attend on him, a sacred and fixed flame of love, and of light never to be extinguished: your care, and pains, and labour here will be but a moment, your reward will be *a crown of life everlasting*. The bread that you eat, and the water that you drink, and of which ye minister a due share to others, will be daily springing up in you unto everlasting life! The divine Manna and the daily sacrifice will be continued. Rest in hope,——look for the coming of your LORD.——Labour in the discharge of your duty.

Indeed it hath sometimes happened that some of the ministers of CHRIST, *stewards of the mystery of God*,† have not been found faithful to what he required. Be ever mindful of the necessity of putting on and wearing the spiritual robes, prefigured by those of *Aaron*: the holy girdle about the loins; the breast-plate, with the *Urim* and *Thummim*; the *Bell* and the *Pomegranate*. Some indeed have had the *Bell* sending forth an empty unavailing sound, but have wanted the *Pomegranate*, the soul-enlivening fruit of the good spirit of CHRIST, our everlasting high priest.

But I hope better things of you, beloved in CHRIST, and things that accompany salvation. I am sure we have need, with the utmost diligence, application, and care, to keep the loins of our mind girded about: we had need to stand upon the watch: we have great

† 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

need to maintain the utmost steadiness: for if we, who stand in the fore front, should fall, we fall not alone: if we slide from the path of truth, who amongst us will be able to stand!

We ought to be endued with the spirit of wisdom, of judgment, and with sound minds; which he hath promised to them that ask this blessing from him, and hath made good his promise.

Are you in health, my brethren? are you strongly attached to the promotion and exaltation of that glorious cause which you have embarked in? have each of you a share in and a proper care of the LORD's work? do you watch over the flock attending on your ministry, under the great Shepherd, and with the tenderness of gospel love *seeking to save that which was lost?*

I freely confess my own fears, that I am not in a state of perfect health and sound mind; labouring as I ought in the work of the LORD. As it is a task of the utmost importance, I ought to remain ever diffident of my own care, and to watch daily in the discharge of a trust so great and important as that of the recovery and preservation of *the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

The prostration of the soul, before the God and Father of mercies, in a cause of such infinite concern, is a continual duty, which can scarce ever be sufficiently discharged. The secret cry of my soul has after this manner frequently arisen; "LORD! spare thy people and bless thine heritage." I am fully persuaded, my friends, were all the ministers and elders

elders more blessed with sound health, the minds of the flock would be more filled with brotherly kindness, and more and more approach to that state which I have mentioned; they would know what is meant by the *angels being spirits*, and how to understand his *ministers being a flame of fire*.

I come now to another class, whom I mean to address under the title of those within the audience of my voice, who continue in a single state.

Are you in health; my brethren and sisters? are you possessors of inward virtue, and of ability to live to God, as becometh his saints; and which alone will lead you to eternal life? do you aspire after these, with an unabated zeal?

You must not expect always to rest satisfied with the good things of this life. The day may come when you will loath the abundance of your temporal possessions: you will then be concerned that you have so indulgently *dwelt in ceiled houses, and have let the house of God lie waste.*† Then you would be glad to have exchanged the fading pleasures of life for the substantial joys of eternity.

Recollect yourselves in the spring time of life; consider early the importance of this exchange, while you have it in your power to make it. Look up to an object more glorious than the present world can afford you, even to the joys of that eternal inheritance, which *the children of the first-born, the innumerable company of happy spirits, the general assembly of*

† Haggai i. 4, &c.

just men already made perfect, are replenished with.
 —Pleasures unspeakable! that exist for evermore!

Art thou in health; my brother?—my dear brethren, are ye fervently engaged in labouring, necessary labouring, for the promotion of the cause of God upon earth?

O ye parents and heads of families, who are placed as delegated shepherds over them; timely beware lest the blood of your children, or of any part of your charge, fall on your heads: (if through your misconduct they become corrupted, and their souls perish.) Know that inquisition for blood will hasten from the supreme Judge, who hath divided the classes of mankind; and, as it were, separated from the rest those who are parents, and have children: his call is to these, “Go work in my vineyard.”

These precious gifts which he hath given, as pledges of his love, are to be led and instructed by them with a proper authority.

If the parents experimentally felt the advantages of spiritual health in themselves, then would they be concerned that the tender minds of their children should be properly cultivated with the knowledge of the LORD, and a fearful apprehension of transgressing his supreme commands. They would teach them to look further than mere temporal acquisitions; even to GOD their Creator. They would bring them up in the nurture and fear of the LORD; in order that their minds might be filled from the storehouse and magazine of boundless good, and early enriched with the joys of GOD's salvation: and *this* would

would naturally diffuse the greatest satisfaction to the parents themselves, to see their children become the delight and ornaments of human nature, and fitted for a glorious change! *the company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.* The ties of nature, and the stronger ties of gratitude to him who gave the blessing, call aloud for teaching the tender minds of your children, to walk in the safe and delightful paths of virtue. With what satisfaction and composure of mind will such parents be enabled to answer the great God, upon his awful examination to this purpose; "What have you done with those tender sheep which I committed to your care in the wilderness? have you trained them up in safety?"—How will such parents be supported by a consciousness of having done their duty, in that solemn hour!—They then may truly say, "I have done my utmost within my contracted sphere, within the narrow precincts of my allotment in life, to fill up my stated duty." Then the supreme Judge will set at his right hand such parents, and they shall be united to him in glory.

And I beseech you parents, elders, ministers (and I include myself), let us all say, Amen, to this solemn care in our respective families; let us all discharge our several duties as men, hoping for the coming of our Lord, who then will say unto us, "Well done, good and faithful servants," even in that hour when he shall come with terrors to make inquisition for blood through the various ranks, whether ministers, elders, heads of families, even throughout the various classes of mankind.

I wish

I wish all parents and heads of families would continually walk hand in hand with their children and families, in the path which leadeth to life eternal; daily watching over, and improving their rising judgments, with the wisdom which cometh from above; instructing and encouraging them in the contemplation of divine things! persuading them to believe, as the truth is, that the things of this world are all uncertain, and fading away; that they have everlasting mansions erected for them in the city of their God; where (if they fall not short, or turn not aside) they will enjoy the company of saints and angels for ever more.

Are you in health; my brethren and sisters?

Exercise yourselves in this your present state, differently from those whose faculties are bounded within the narrow limits of this world; cultivate, continually cultivate, the minds of your offspring, endeavouring to raise in them a proper comprehension of the dignity of their natures, and to fix in them early a steady belief of their *immortality*; which is of the utmost importance to all!

The hearts of those are unsound, who live in a perpetual attachment to the pride of life, who are contaminated with the love of the world, wherein their chief happiness appears to be placed: how can such point out the way to the city of God? how can they say to their children, "Let us retreat from the world, from this scene of corruption; let us withdraw from the cares, the solitudes of life: let us ascend to our appointed home: let us con-
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“template the joys of eternity : let nothing separate
“us from that blessed hope!”

How can parents thus address their children, when they have, perhaps, for a long course of years, ceased to consider the awful importance of the subject; and their own minds continue fixed, and tied down to the fading enjoyments of life! Alas! that the folly and vanity of the superfluous pleasures of the world should so entirely engage and engross the attention of any one immortal individual, as to take up almost every moment of their precious time!

Hence, sometimes, parents, instead of instructing the minds of their children, have so totally corrupted their own, that they have laid obstructions in the way to the immortal happiness of their offspring, and, when their children have for a time trod in the ways of religion and virtue, they have been so extremely corrupt themselves, as to oppose them in their passage; to obstruct them, with violence, in their way to glory; and thereby aggravated their own guilt beyond expression: alas! what will their punishment prove, when convicted of so great a neglect and violation of their duty? when he that is the Judge of quick and dead shall appear in judgment, to render to every man according to his works! May all parents, who are negligent in the discharge of their duties, lay it seriously to heart.

In the mean time, may you, my brethren and sisters in a spiritual relation, continue in a state of lively active health—labouring in the sure ground of hope, that, *when the great Shepherd himself shall appear,*

appear, you may also appear with him in glory. If you so persist, I cannot but yet hope, that your steadfast continuance will prove the means of spreading spiritual health, in an eminent degree. For as, on the one hand, minds infected and vitiated *with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life,* are very apt to spread the contagion to all that are round about them; so, on the other hand, such as are restored by CHRIST to a state of spiritual health, and by him steadily preserved in it, often become instrumental in his hand, to diffuse that blessing; from whence, healthy parents have been frequently observed to have healthy children.

I am convinced that the LORD is at work amongst the rising generation; many of whom stand convicted in their own minds, of the want of spiritual health; and are imploring the mercy of the God of their salvation.

In order to your attaining it, let me call upon you again, the present rising generation, whose stations in life may be likely to have some little continuance; be ever steadfast in the performance of your religious duties, that you may become heirs of the kingdom, and have your portion with the children of God.

It seems to me of the greatest importance, in relation to the various affairs of life, to form aright the minds of youth; and therefore, I once more intreat every parent present, that you watch over, and carefully nourish every seed of virtue springing up in the minds of your children, for the sake of their, and of your own, temporal welfare; as well

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as for the hope and assurance of both their, and your own, eternal happiness.

And here let me class every single individual; as every single individual is passing on his way to an eternal state of existence—and that they may be guided by Infinite Wisdom is my earnest desire, and be at last received into glory! welcomed thither by their dear Redeemer!

In this city he hath laid his hand upon one, and upon another. He hath preserved many from the pollutions that too frequently reign in the world; and hath mercifully induced some to look early into the law of liberty, into the counsel of his will, who thereby learn the things which belong to their peace.

Art thou in health; my brother? Art thou not only called from a state of darkness, into his marvellous light; but, obedient to the call, entered upon the road to eternal glory? Art thou in health; my fellow pilgrim?

A sense of the want of that food which CHRIST gives, is at least a symptom of life.

I believe it may be said concerning some among you, as was said formerly to CHRIST; *Lord, be whom thou lovest is sick.* The decay of health in many, has been owing to foul feeding; to their daily feeding upon the spirit, maxims, and manners of the world, upon exterior appearances, upon comparative righteousness, upon a comparison of their present, with their former state; whose minds are

relaxed with the love and spirit of vanity. Some have relaxed into evil, and are now become too much unacquainted with God and his law; which, to holiness, and to that *only*, annexes happiness. Many of these might have gone on from one degree of strength to another, had they not too much regarded the things of time, and fed too greedily upon the temptations and pleasures of this life; not enough considering, that the diseases and disorders of the mind thus fed, must certainly at last bring death, even the *death*, though not *dissolution*, of the soul. They might have been cloathed, if not with a perfect heart, yet with a certain degree of strength; and been more and more advanced on their way to the regions of bliss.

I beseech you, continue in your love to the gospel of CHRIST: that, day after day, you may feed on the holy sacrifice, and on that eternal fruit with which he nourishes the soul that *hungers and thirsts after righteousness*. And, I cannot help, while I am speaking, pressing you in a more immediate manner, if possible, that, not relying on your own wisdom, and your own strength, but in a full dependence and leaning upon the breast of the beloved JESUS, you all, patiently, with a holy soundness, proceed in *the highway to the city of God*; that you may be crowned at last with glory, honour, and immortality!

I find in me (at least) one qualification of a gospel minister; even that of a strong and ardent love, which wisheth well to all mankind: and in particular that you who are present, may enjoy such a state of perfect health, as I have been at this time enforcing

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ing to your serious consideration: may it spread through every class; may you all increase in the stability of righteousness, through this life; and may it carry you into the boundless joys of eternity, into that glorious city, not one of whose inhabitants can say, "I am sick."

N. B. *The Writer could not be present in the Morning, nor at the immediate Beginning of the following Discourse; but was assured, by many present, that the Preacher had proceeded but a little Way.*

The Subject taken from the Parable of the Unjust Steward, viz. this Question,

*How much owest thou unto my Lord?**

19th Day of the Fifth Month, in the Afternoon.

HAVING in the morning enlarged on our debts or obligations to God, for the abundant variety of temporal blessings received from him in trust, for the good of others, &c. he proceeded thus:

If we are besides ourselves, it is unto God: If we are sober, it is for your sakes.† If, with the strength of love, and a zealous fervency of mind, we labour in and for the church, and for the good of those to whom we are sent; if rising early and lying down late; if being willing to spend and be spent, disinterestedly, without any lucrative motive, or receiving any thing, but mere food, from those amongst whom we labour; if ministering to our own wants, and to the wants of others, carry any kind of evidence to the considerate and prudent mind, of a disinterested gospel ministry; we have, so far, a valid claim to it.

* Luke xvi. 5.—† 2 Cor. v. 13.

*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants, for his sake.**

If we are besides ourselves, it is unto God. If we are sober, it is for your sakes. Having known the terrors of the Lord for sin; having experienced a gradual progression from the pit of pollution, from the mire and clay; having, in some measure, tasted of the good word of life, and of the powers of the world to come, we apprehend we have authority, more than any human laws or ordination of men can give us, to tell to others, what God hath done for our souls. I may proceed yet further with truth and sincerity, having the sanction of him, who is the searcher of hearts; for the love of Christ constraineth us.† The foundation of the gospel ministry is this constraining love of CHRIST.

We enter not into the ministerial office, with any application of this sort, viz. *Put me (I pray thee) into one of the priests offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.‡* We think higher of the gospel ministry; so that no temporary emolument can possibly be an adequate inducement to us, to enter upon it; for *the love of Christ constraineth us.* We speak with reverence and a feeling heart; and we believe the christian religion will never flourish, in its full perfection and excellency, till their being thus constrained, becomes the case of all that take the name of God in their mouths in a public manner. *The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all,*

* 2 Cor. iv. 5.—† 2 Cor. v. 14.—‡ 1 Sam. ii. 36.

*that they which live, should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him that died for them and rose again.**

This expression seems to me, if properly considered, to cast no inconsiderable light upon the propriety of that query applied to us, viz. *How much owest thou unto my Lord?* which I cannot yet relinquish; though some may think I dwell upon it too long. *The love of Christ constraineth us, because if one died for all, then were all dead.* I look upon this as a fundamental part of the christian faith; and that life and immortality have been brought to light by the gospel. We were all dead: we have all partaken of guilt: we have all been in a state of estrangement from the covenant of God: we have all become, more or less, *aliens to the commonwealth of Israel.*†

In this state of death the voice of God hath been signally extended unto mankind. I have sometimes considered with great attention, his declaration, *O! death, I will be thy plagues;*‡ and it hath made a deep impression upon my mind. This declaration of the most high God, hath been amply verified in the experience of all, who have been quicken'd into a life of piety. *Christ hath been the resurrection and the life to all such.* Though death hath come upon all, we are not all included under death; so as to be left without the quickening vivifying power, that is offered to raise the dead to life.

The dead have heard the voice of the Son of God! || and have been raised again to life. I cannot think

* 2 Cor. v. 14. — † Ephes. ii. 12. — ‡ Hos. xiii. 14. — || John v. 25.

but it has been the experience of divers, within the audience of my voice, who know the certainty of this important truth, though others may reflect upon me, as being beside myself; yet, if so, I may say with the apostle, *it is unto God.* But I would gladly speak intelligibly to the soul that is on its way to the regions of immortality; for if we are sober, *it is for your sakes.* I would ask whether a secret something hath not often visited your souls, an unspeakable something, often secretly and immediately attended, that hath engaged you to send up heavenly and earnest wishes, and raised in your minds strong aspirations, or breathings, after God? When we are told that *the whole creation groaneth together in bondage until now,** we have no doubt of its being relative and applicable to the present times, or such times of longing after God, to be delivered by him. *The Lord from heaven is the quickening spirit.†* An expression of want, from a real sense of it, is an evidence of life; or being raised by him, from a state of death. We have not been left in a dead state; this prediction hath been verified, *O! death, I will be thy plagues.* He hath brought the first evidence of life, which is a sense of want. The spiritually dead, have receiv'd it; and it hath been of his pure mercy, that he hath followed us from time to time, hath met us, as it were, in a narrow place, with instructions and reproofs, and secretly raised in us the hidden life of his own divine wisdom; he hath caused the animating and warming beams of the sun of righteousness to break forth. And, yet more, the word which called *Lazarus out of the grave,* hath already, in a

* Rom. viii. 21, 22 — † 1 Cor. xv. 45 and 47.

good degree, raised some of us to life, even life eternal! *death is swallowed up in victory!**

And therefore *the love of Christ constraineth us, because he hath proved "the plagues of our death."* He not only died, but the immediate manifestation of his quickening spirit hath led *captivity captive*, that we, by him, may triumph over the united powers of darkness.

We follow not formally; but we believe in, and are convinced, fully convinced, of the doctrines of the christian religion, the incarnation, glory, life, death, mighty miracles, and various circumstances relative to the holy life of JESUS, *as in the volume of the book it is written;*† and can, in an awful and reverent sense, commemorate those vast and most interesting events.

We admire, with humble hearts and minds, the awful transactions of that time, when sweat, like drops of blood, ran from the face of the holy JESUS! when, being in agony, he prayed more earnestly! when he was betrayed, his sacred head crown'd with thorns! his face spit upon! he was most ignominiously treated, and as *a sheep, before her shearers is dumb,*‡ he complained not.

We behold him, in his agonies on Calvary Mount, offering himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; that he might purify us, by the shedding of his precious blood! *more precious than the blood of goats and lambs;* or any other that was

* 1 Cor. xv. 54.—† Isaiah liiii. 7.—‡ Psalm xi. 7.

shed under the law. We believe in his amazing mercy, in offering himself there; when, loaden with the immense weight of the sins of mankind, and the immediate sense of the father's presence withdrawn, he was left to suffer alone; under this extreme pressure crying out, *Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabac-thani!* was crucified! dead! and buried.

Here pause a little, I beseech you!—contemplate the adorable theme! acknowledge, O man! that unbounded gratitude, which is ever due from thee: O! my soul, *how much owest thou unto thy Lord!*

X I know we have been stigmatiz'd, as disbelieving the truths of the christian religion. However, I call the divine record, the SAVIOUR of the world, that was offer'd a sacrifice without the gate of Jerusalem, to witness for my belief, that he was sent from God, to do the father's will: and I do, without controversy, believe that he was *God manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, believed on in the world, and received up into glory.** We do not at all doubt that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself†. That Christ gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time; || that with his stripes we are healed.‡

By virtue of that holy sacrifice the remission of sins is gained; the awakening power of that sentence which is due to sin is felt in a state of alienation from God; and as we believe, that if one died for all, then were all dead; so, we believe that he who was

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.—† 2 Cor. v. 19.—|| 1 Tim. ii. 6.
‡ Isaiah iii. 5.

crucified, dead, and buried, likewise triumphed over the grave, and now *sitteth at the right hand of God*, in a glorified body, to make intercession for man, in order that he might effectually purchase, and redeem to himself, a people to the praise of his name: and diffuse, throughout his universal empire, a similarity of opinion and nature, arising from the experience of his universal redeeming love.

I am no Arian, far from it:—I believe in the clear emphatic testimonies laid down in holy writ, that CHRIST was more than a prophet. I repeat my belief, that he suffered, died, ascended, and is now come *the second time, without sin, to salvation*;† in order to reconcile the world to himself. I know many are willing to admit that he died for all, as all were in a state of death; and that by the imputation of his righteousness, all are justified in the sight of GOD. Whereas I think it more just to proceed in the language of the holy inspired apostle; that *they which live, should not henceforth live to themselves; but to him who died for them, and rose again*; that there may be an effectual redemption, a thorough change; not the imputation of *righteousness*, without *works*; but a *real substantial righteousness* in the heart and life; which may operate upon, and regulate the mind and will, and lead us to a conformity to his divine nature: not a righteousness imputed to us from what CHRIST did and suffered without us; but a righteousness raised by him within us; through our surrendering ourselves to his government, and yielding entire submission to his heart-cleansing, refining power.

† Heb. ix. 28.

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However this doctrine may relish with some, I am convinced he died for all, that all should be saved; that, through him, we might be justified in the sight of GOD; that we might put on the Lord Jesus Christ, with all his divine affections.

The whole creation of God groaneth together, † to be cloathed upon with a house from heaven; ‡ not an imaginary house, and an imaginary righteousness; but, to be cloathed upon with the grace of complete salvation; to put on the LORD JESUS CHRIST; having first put off the old man, with all his works, and with all his corrupt wisdom, or knowledge; which puffeth up, instead of that charity which edifieth.

Christ is made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption.

In remembering therefore that he died for us, let us consider what follows: that henceforth we should not live to ourselves. I am crucified with Christ*, says one of the apostles, as a private person: and it should, or ought to be the language in truth of each individual, through all succeeding ages. Nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. He is become my righteousness; not by imputation only—but he actually liveth in me; and the life which I now live, is by the faith of the Son of GOD. I think I may now say, Let us press forward toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God.† Let us be crucified with CHRIST, crucified to the world, and the world to us.

† Rom. viii. 22. — ‡ 2 Cor. v. 22. — * Gal. ii. 20. —
‡ Phil. iii. 14.

O! my friends, for such I term you in the course of that universal love, which reacheth forth to the whole human race, which floweth from him who hath thus wrought for me, and *brought life and immortality to light in my soul*. Is any one of you desirous of being inform'd, *how much owest thou unto my Lord?*—lay hold on his offers of redemption; live in his fear, in fellowship with him, *in communion with the church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven*: so will you far better know than any one on earth can ever inform you.

Examine the rising suggestions of your own minds; you are not form'd to live merely to yourselves, merely within the contracted bounds of human privileges, in the narrow limits of mortality. Consider the dignity of your nature; you are form'd for the most glorious purposes.

I earnestly wish the rising youth would lay these things seriously to heart, and often meditate upon them, as one formerly did; who thus expresses himself, *While I was musing the fire burned. My heart was hot within me; then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know my end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am.*† —That they would contemplate the great design of Providence, with regard to their immortality, which would lessen their esteem of the unsubstantial joys of time, and engage them to pursue those which are *unspeakable and full of glory for ever. While I was musing the fire burned.*

† Psalm xxxix. 3. 4.

Continue

Continue this musing, this state of meditation; prize the invitations of the spirit of CHRIST, mercifully extended to your immortal spirits; and let your minds mount upwards: remember your pious predecessors, now perhaps in glory; and their connections in the world of spirits: likewise put this question to yourselves, upon every serious occasion, *How much oweest thou unto my Lord?*

I am fully convinced were the Christian world in general to leave out exterior ceremonies, and enter more into this inward meditation, their minds would be more largely replenished with divine fruits; and those who are entering as it were upon the wilderness of this world, would then partake of the advantage. O! that we might all live in the beauty of holiness!

My heart was hot within me; then spake I with my tongue.—A necessary preparation for a preacher! Abel's offering on account of such a preparation, was more acceptable to God than his brother's.

Then spake I with my tongue.—O! rising generation, what you speak with your tongues, let it be from the same good source of hearts divinely prepared; since on the other hand for every idle word that men speak, they must give an account in the day of judgment. As you often speak with your tongues, fervently desire that the sacred faculties of the mind may be fitted for divine meditations, and the tongue to publish for the honour of God and benefit of others, what you have been taught by him: so will you never admit or utter any thing contrary to the divinity of CHRIST JESUS your LORD.

Lord,

Lord, let me know mine end ! O that this sound may dwell upon your minds, who are the hope of the next generation ! upon whom the weighty trust and care of the cause of God must, in a little time, necessarily devolve ; that you may come to the knowledge of the measure of your days. I think, without violence to the text, you may learn from it that you are destined for immortality : but the love of worldly things is too apt to engage the attention of that immortal part, the soul ; which occasions, to many, the want of their knowing the great and glorious end for which they were form'd, a little lower than the angels, and intended to be crown'd with glory and honour.

Lord ! let me know my end and the measure of my days !

I tremble methinks upon the brink of eternity ! and so, with a little proper reflection, you might say all ; the aged, the middle aged, and the youth. — The end of all things is at hand : flatter not yourselves therefore with length of days, and a long prosperity of worldly possessions ; suffer me to beseech you for the sake of your immortal souls.

What do I owe to my God ? — What do I not owe him ? — He hath snatch'd me as a brand out of the fire ; and I would not, tho' to gain the world, tread back again in the path of folly.

I know it by experience, and therefore I would persuade you, not to turn aside from the God of your salvation ; but to acknowledge the infinite debt you

you owe him; and to pay him daily with obedience, adoration and praise.

Our sins have been great, and our transgressions ~~never~~ could have been obliterated, had not CHRIST done it for us; let us therefore no longer dwell upon the *rock of presumption* with Satan who hath been a liar from the beginning; but let us rather *descend* into the *valley of humility and peace*, and *settle accounts* with the GOD of our lives, from whom I had stray'd to that degree that my life became a burden to me, and I have wish'd that I had never been born; but CHRIST, who was a friend to publicans and sinners, is now become *the rock of my salvation*! he hath caused me to trust in him, and to seek the LORD my GOD. The debt I owe is infinite, I desire ever to acknowledge it with all possible gratitude; and to do my utmost towards the discharge of it, while I have my being.

If there is a soul within the audience of my voice which (upon this awful query) *How much owest thou unto my Lord?* is ready to apprehend, that it owes too much ever to hope for a discharge, or freedom from the heavy load of debt it has contracted; I have a little to say to such, even from my own experience: thy transgressions do not exceed the bounds of his mercy; he still careth for thee, with an inexpressible fatherly care and tenderness. Even when his afflictions are upon thee, they are intended for thy good. *The bruised reed he will not break, the smoking flax he will not quench.* The more any of you see your real state, the more you remember the favours you have received, and feel the burthen of
your

your injustice and ingratitude; the more readily will he meet the penitent disposition of your minds.

I have no manner of doubt but He, *whose work is salvation*, who *came into the world* purely and purposely *to save sinners*, will carry on his own work, and, as you wholly resign yourselves to his forming hand, will purify your hearts, reconcile you to the Father, and make you everlasting instances and monuments of his infinite mercy. Lift up therefore thy head in hope, whoever art in this humbled penitent state; for *thy salvation draws nigh*. Thou owest abundance to thy LORD; and there is an abundance which thou canst never pay: but there is the good Samaritan, ever ready to do for thee, as for him, who going from *Jerusalem to Jericho*, fell among robbers; by whom he was wounded; and to say, *take care of him, and I will pay*. There is a glorious sound from the great and good friend of publicans and sinners; he is ready to say to thee who art in this penitent state before him, *Take thy bill and write down fifty*. He will blot out thy sins as a cloud, and thy transgressions as a thick cloud.*

I cannot but remember with renew'd feeling, and warm emotion of heart, the day that anxiety (in the view of my condition) seized me; and how his mercy relieved me from it. He made my soul feel his compassion, and in the depth of gratitude thankfully to adore him. And hence I often feel a tenderness of mind toward those who are weary of vanity, and heavy laden with a sense of their manifold transgressions. I beseech such, by the mercy of

* *Isai. xliv. 22.*

GOD, that they would fly to him in their anguish of mind; for it is he, and he alone that can speak peace to the sinner: though your unrighteousness may be great, it is not in any degree of proportion to his infinite mercy! Again, such among you to whom I have spoke, who delight to dwell in the path of temptation, wherein you have too long continued; I warn you to consider, that you are in the road to destruction.

I would not give up, like Esau, *my birth-right* to seek a place of repentance with tears, and not find it.* O my soul! for ever acknowledge how much thou owest unto thy LORD! Let none say "he hath blessed me variously, and in some future time I will awake my soul to gratitude. I have now something else to do;" like him who, when an apostle reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, replied, *Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.*†

The like disposition continues to prevail in too many; and this seems to be the language of their hearts, "Go thy way this time; call upon me when I have lived to myself, and answered my own purposes a little longer: visit me at some distant time hence." Oh! rather *to-day*, while it is called *to-day*.—Harden not thy heart: do not defer thy repentance a moment; thou knowest not what a moment may produce. Consider thy repeated transgressions; thy multiplied offences against God: heap not up wrath against the day of wrath: swell not the direful account. Thou hast hitherto trampled upon

* Heb. xii. 16, 17.—† Acts xxiv. 25.

the goodness and the mercies of the God that made thee; venture not on presumption and delay, Time is uncertain: Immortality is at hand.

I beseech you therefore my friends at the present time, that you will lay to heart the necessity of your making up this great account: delay it not to the decline of life. Many are on the brink of the grave! reflect upon your extreme danger! think not of crowding the account of your repentance into your last hour of life! You will find it extremely difficult to labour under the infirmities of the body, upon a death-bed, without a reasonable ground of hope: all the offers of mercy having been long continued, and often repeated; yet by you as long slighted, and as often rejected; what then will discharge you from that dreadful account! I wish it may never be the case of any within the audience of my voice. Let us all immediately ponder, rightly consider, and seriously improve this consideration, *How much owest thou unto my Lord?*

A PRAYER *after the foregoing Discourse.*

WITH unspeakable reverence we presume to approach thy presence, O Father! who art in heaven: and, with the voice of thanksgiving and holy praise, to offer the tribute, that is due to Thee alone!

In a commemoration of thy mercy, thy infinite mercy! we are awfully bowed before Thee, as at thy sacred foot-stool; in the deepest reverence and thankfulness, for the stretching forth *of the rod and the staff,** which thou hast been pleased to bless, as the means of our furtherance in the way of life and salvation.

Though humbled in dust, in the sense of our unworthiness, we are, nevertheless, encouraged to breathe unto Thee; to make mention of thy name, with joy of heart: we adore that goodness, which hath put it into our hearts to seek, serve and fear Thee; and to turn to the place where *prayer is wont to be made.*†

Thou hast loved us before we loved Thee: thy love, O LORD! hath not been after the manner of men: Thou hast called us, when we were enemies; and hast reconciled transgressors to thyself. Thou hast followed us in the day of our revolting; and,

* Psal. xxiii. 4.—† Acts xvi. 13.

when we were straying in the wilderness, as a most gracious and tender shepherd Thou didst lay thy hand on us, not only with judgment, but with mercy; and hast brought us home again unto thy flock, and thy fold, and forgiven us our multiplied transgressions.

Our deviations from thy holy path have not been punished with inexorable justice; but thy conduct toward us has been clothed with unspeakable compassion. O! Thou everlasting shepherd, and bishop of our souls! who hast looked upon us, when weltering as in our blood, and by thy divine power hast healed us. Thou, that art the physician of our souls, hast cared for us, when *the priest and the levite* past us by.—When cast out and surrounded with the woes of unutterable distress: when thick clouds covered us,—Thou, in thy abundant love *bowed the heavens and came down* to our help, *and all the darkness was put under thy feet!* * Thou hast made the clouds thy chariot, and walked upon the wings of wind, for our deliverance; when our iniquities, like floods, rose high, and appeared unto us like to swallow us up in everlasting confusion! O! adorable condescension! We have no language to express thy mercy, and the boundless obligations we lie under to thy Majesty! who hast thus, in the times of unspeakable anxiety, vouchsafed to appear for us: and even when we have wandered from the counsel of thy will, and trod in the path of the wicked, *Thou sentest forth thy light and thy truth, and didst lead us back to thy holy hill!* †

* Psal. xviii. 9.—† Psal. xliii. 3.

We acknowledge all these blessings to thy praise,
O! shepherd of *Israel!* who *sleepest not by day, nor*
slumberest by night.

To Thee we owe all our faculties, and all that is within us; and let them all, we pray Thee, be consecrated to thy honour: we beseech that all our steps may be directed to Thee; and more and more to thy service. For, Father of infinite kindness! it hath pleased Thee to rank us among thy children; to make *our dwelling with thy light; our habitation with the lifting up of the smiles of thy countenance;* and to remove every obstacle to a perfect communion with Thee: the power is in thy hands; sanctify us thoroughly to this end; write the inscription of holy and heavenly characters upon our hearts; and, Oh! grant that we may still be preserved, through every trial and probation, to a peaceable admission into thy kingdom.

Blot out all our transgressions! forgive us freely, for thy dear Son's sake! remember us in the midst of thy mercy! deliver us, we pray Thee, as Thou hast graciously hitherto done, like a tender Father.

Grant we may never forget thy counsel; sooner cut the thread of our lives, and number us to the silent grave!

May we follow Thee, with our whole hearts, submit to the patient resignation of our all, for thy dear service; and keep us to a happy conclusion in thy favour! it is all we ask, and beg at thy hand:

with

with regard to outward circumstances, thy will be done! we have no other supplication to offer.

Preserve us, as in the hollow of thy hand; that from a militant state here, we may pass to a triumphant one, in thy everlasting kingdom!

O LORD! have mercy on thy people, and thy children, when they spread their hands towards thy holy habitation. Cloath them with the spirit of grace and supplication. Excite them to fly to Thee, their only rock and refuge; and to thy name, that is an impregnable defence; where the righteous in all ages have ever found safety!

Regard those who are far off, and remain unacquainted with thy name. We pray Thee, let the same mercy spread to *them*, which Thou hast shewed unto *us*. Let the diffusion of thy spiritual blessings, in and through thy dear Son, flow among them, that they may seek Thee; that a holy anxiety of mind may take place, in order to a rest in the day of trouble; and that when the various trials and troubles of time are over, they having, through thy abundant goodness and sure support, *fought the good fight, and kept the faith*, may be received by Thee, and be crown'd with glory and immortality, in thy everlasting kingdom!

Oh Thou that art fairer than the sons of men! grace flows from thy lips; Thou beholdest us when tempted, and speakest to our states with all the language of tenderness. Father of mercy! grant that innumerable multitudes may resort to thy temple, that sacred house, which thou hast erected to thy honour

honour and service. May the poor, the sick, the maimed, the blind, and the naked, inspired by Thee with holy confidence, look towards *Sion*; and be clothed by Thee, with the wedding garment; with the righteousness of their dear SAVIOUR!

Thus, gracious God! we are divinely encouraged to supplicate thy name, on the behalf of the church militant, wherever scattered; that it may flourish in peace and stability: that, not only in part, but in the whole lustre of meridian brightness and splendor, they may commemorate thy glory!

In an humble sense of thy mercy and goodness to the workmanship of thy hands, we thank Thee, that thou hast been pleased so abundantly to manifest thy loving kindness and favour, in and amongst us.

We prostrate ourselves before the throne of thy Majesty and grace! we would offer to Thee an humble, grateful sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise, dominion, and every excellent attribute! for we know that we have nothing but from thy bounty, who art the rock of our salvation!

To Thee, Father of infinite mercy! for the multitude of thy mercies, in JESUS CHRIST our LORD! —To Thee, the author of every blessing! with the Son of thy bosom; our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, the Lamb immaculate through the eternal spirit, be all praise ascribed, now, henceforth, and for ever more. *Amen.*

The following Discourse was delivered at the Fryers Meeting in Bristol, on the 22d Day of the Fifth Month, 1767.

I HAVE frequently thought, and the sentiment hath been confirmed from my own observation and experience, that a great and excellent point would be gained, highly conducive to the advantage of mankind, did they generally, though from no surer guide than tradition, subscribe with heart and mind, to that certain truth, recorded in holy writ:

“ Verily there is a reward for the righteous: Verily he is a God, that judgeth in the earth; ”†

As such a persuasion, from whatever ground it arises, naturally tends to influence the conduct to avoid evil, and to pursue that which is good; and with regard to many, it hath proved a step to their nearer acquaintance with GOD, who is the only sure guide to true happiness.

Indeed I scarce think there can be many, if there be any, who are hardy enough to deny the existence of the supreme Being; but believe on the contrary, that many, through the divine favour enlightened to see their duty, and assisted to discharge it; do, in consequence of these favours, contemplate, with satisfaction inexpressible, these attributes of the

† Psalm lviii. 1 r.

most high God, here mentioned by the Psalmist; and could I be induced to think, that any part of mankind had swerved from their duty, for want of a firm conviction of those his attributes, as relative to his creatures; and of the certainty, that there is really a God who judgeth the earth: I say, could I believe their minds were destitute of this animating and enlivening prospect of his power, omniscience, and goodness, in his superintendent care, and present judging the earth, I should deem such but a very little removed, if any, from the state of the *Athenians*, upon whose altars the holy apostle discovered an inscription,

“ *To the unknown God.** ”

Indeed a language that was spoken formerly hath been too much adopted by succeeding generations; numbers of whom have been like those men of Jerusalem, who said, *the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.*† Many (seduced by the grand deceiver and his agents) have endeavoured to estrange and withdraw themselves from the arbitrator of the whole earth: they have hence grown dark in their imaginations, and in like manner thus reasoned with themselves, “ He will do us no good, why therefore should we seek him? he will do us no harm; why should we fear him?” This we may justly look upon, as the most unhappy seduction of mind! at it misleads to the utmost distance, (without timely recovery) from that state of obedience, in which we are only capable of happiness, through the favourable notice of our Father who is in heaven.

* Acts xvii. 23.—† Zeph. i. 12.

But we may justly conclude, that such impiety past not the attention of an all-seeing God, in as much as he replied, "I will punish those men of Jerusalem, who have said, 'The Lord doeth us no good, why should we seek him? he will not do us any harm, why should we fear him?'"

The certainty of his superintendency, hath continued to be the happiness of all the wise and good in all ages; and it is these, and only these, that discern wherein true happiness consists. Hence hath it become, and still remains, an established glorious truth, accompanied with, and confirmed by, the voice of all generations.

Under this head in particular, a Petition or Prayer that was put up to Him who hath created the earth, and assigned a reward to the righteous, by *Agur* the son of *Jaketh*, hath appeared to my mind, as necessary at this day to be adopted by every individual, who is desirous of living to the best, wisest, and happiest purpose of life; without which they had better never have lived: And I cannot but recommend it most particularly to *You*, the rising generation, whose minds I trust are at times susceptible of proper impressions, who are not become slaves to the vanity and lusts of the world: and indeed it seems like the language of one that is entering upon the stage of life: *Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die! Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain!†*

† Prov. xxx. 7, 8, 9.

The substance of this memorable requisition hath appear'd to my mind, during the course of a long series of observations of men, and times; with regard to its import in point of religion, virtue, the love and peace of God; as including indeed, all that is good and necessary for our safe conduct and support through this life, to that completion of happiness, propos'd as the final reward of the righteous.

But how will some be able to prefer a petition to a power in whom, alas! they have no trust? who would gladly be possess'd of, and are much better pleas'd with, sharing a crown of wicked prosperity in this world, than with the prospect of a crown of pure and perfect felicity, in a state of endless futurity.

O that parents would timely and vigilantly exert themselves to raise early impressions in the tender minds of their children, in order to fix deeply the christian doctrine, with all its glorious consequences; firmly persuading and convincing them, that they are under the immediate notice of that Being, who is ever unspeakably good, and gracious; and informing them, that he is cloathed with every awful reverential attribute; as being perfectly wise, powerful and good, yet strictly just; that he is the maker of us all; and that he delights to be called upon by us, with the tender and endearing appellation of, "Our father, who art in heaven."

Wherefore, under the deep and reverent sense of the certainty of his continual presence and providence, let us be ever careful, ever earnestly desirous to constitute a part of his children and family, in this our probationary

probationary state; that as we, by our rank in the creation, belong to the order of spirits; we may assuredly hope to join the cherubim and seraphim, in the habitations of glory and peace, by our now becoming members of his militant church; and may, when our warfare shall be accomplished, unite with the chorus of his triumphant hosts, in the language of grateful adoration and praise.

And indeed without this blessed hope, we are of all creatures the most miserable! being daily surrounded with lamentation and woe! combating with secret or obvious distresses! and encountering, from the cradle to the grave, a perpetual succession and variety of afflictions! We might therefore truly say, if our hopes were only fixed upon the transitory and fleeting pleasures of this life, we should be, of all the animal creation, the most miserable! But we are assured, that nothing less than GOD himself, is the infinite and endless reward of all that diligently and constantly solicit him to the following purpose: — *Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die; remove far from me vanity, and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain!*

Which is as if the prophet had said, “Thou art my father, the author of my being; I made nothing myself, but am wholly and entirely the offspring of thy power, and workmanship of thy hands: thou knowest therefore what is best and fittest for me; and what can I require else from the hands of thee, O my God! than thy prefer-
“ vation

“ vation out of the dangers of those opposite extremes in life; thy guidance in the middle path of safety and innocence, and the enjoyment of thy approbation and favour in my walking therein.”

His mind was, doubtless, deeply impressed with the awfulness and essential subject of his petition; and *the removing far from him vanity and lies*, seems to constitute a very considerable part of it. But too many of us, deviating from this one most important point, are daily inclined to wander in the broad path of vanity and folly, and prone to mistake it for the path of peace; till oftentimes the stroke of adversity, of pain of body, or affliction of mind, convinceth *in part*, and, if unreformed, that of *Death* may *fully* convince us, when too late! of this most fatal mistake.

The Prophet saw into the propriety of that frame of mind, which utters the language dictated by divine wisdom: *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding:** inasmuch as his gracious superintendency and merciful notice of his creatures is such as even *taketh in the ends of the earth*;† and daily affordeth us the clearest manifestation of his goodness here, as it hath evidently pointed out to us that glorious path which leads to safety and eternal peace. But *vanity and lies* have too frequently estranged the mind, drawn it off from heavenly objects and heavenly cares, and fixed its attention upon things wholly unworthy the notice of an immortal spirit. Under the seducing influence

* Prov. iii. 4.—† Isaiah xlv. 22.

of *vanity and lies*, men have been frequently led to pursue many things agreeable to their own wishes and imagined interests, without the least regard paid to justice and equity.

I may possibly observe an explanation and distinction of the two states as I go on, which *Agur* seems to refer to, viz. *The distress and misery of the poor*, on the one hand; and the *vanity and pride of heart*, too frequently conspicuous in the rich, on the other.

Were the lives of men designed to be wholly alienated from a state of justice and virtue, and entirely instructed and fixed in the maxims and manners of this world, singly to be taught to consider it as the chief end of their existence, there would then be some excuse for using every species of art in joining † *house to house, and laying field to field, 'till there be no place, that they may be seated as it were alone in the midst of the earth*: but now, as the great design of Him who judgeth the earth, and rewardeth the righteous, hath been abundantly manifested and denounced to such as thus counter-act it, they who are intrusted with riches will appear the more inexcusable for their unbounded avarice, and can have nothing to plead in favour of their violation of his plain and clear intentions respecting mankind. It will all at last be found *vanity and lies*, without virtue: without a faithful dedication of their hearts to the revealed will of God. It is an observation of the preacher that *God giveth to man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy—but to the sinner he giveth travel; to gather and to heap up, that he may*

† *Isaiah v. 8.*

*give to him that is good before God.** And though he who is too unmindful of his Creator, may have erected edifices that appear to the eye of the spectator as if they would stand for ages, and may *call them by his own name*; yet even in this view, without virtue, he is, in the sense of *Agur*, a liar to himself: he thinks he hath secured happiness, when the frame of his mind is the reverse of it; fixt probably in a state of exclusion, from what may be justly deem'd true and substantial happiness; or any acquisition, which will be acceptable and well-pleasing in the sight of God. In this circumstance therefore he is a liar. The by-stander indeed, who sees him in the free enjoyment of affluence, and taking his ease, in appearance, in the fullness of his heart, may be ready to conclude such a one happy, by being unacquainted with his secret griefs; whereas many of his moments, if their true state could be penetrated into, would appear like those distressed ones of the king of Israel; who, when he was seated in the height of his splendor, magnificence, and royalty, *rent his clothes; put on sackcloth, fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.†*

Labour therefore after righteousness, rather than to *lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth; where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal;‡* that by such timely and prudent application, ye may lay up for yourselves *treasures in Heaven; where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.*

Ye rising youth, whose minds are open to the dic-

Ecclef. ii. 26.—† 1 Kings xxi. 27.—‡ Matth. vi. 19, 20.

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tates of *that wisdom which is from above*,† and to the just and tender sentiments which it inspires. Be your inquiries to the following purpose. frequent as they are important, “What am I? Who made me? “To what purpose was I created?” dedicate your moments to the real purposes of life, pay not too great a regard to any prospects or temptations of this world; fix not your attention upon its maxims and proposed interests, which, when they become our idols, do but deceive and deprive us of infinitely greater; beware of being seduced by the outgoings of your own minds; let not things that are transient and perishing gain too great a possession of your hearts and affections; nor ever neglect the following interesting petition, *Remove far from me vanity and lies*, and remember that He is the guide, helper, and director of all them that put their trust in him.

Give me neither poverty nor riches. I readily conclude that in the first part of this petition all would willingly join; but riches are most apt to lay hold of our hearts and affections: many indeed are the promises to the poor, *Whom the Lord will deliver when he crieth, even him that hath no helper*;† they are frequently encouraged to hope; while the rich, if they misapply the riches committed to their trust, we are assured by divine authority, will be constrained to *weep and howl*: they enjoy the blessing and bounty of Heaven, which they ought to apply to the noblest purposes, particularly the relief of their distressed brethren, *in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, (saith our Saviour) ye have done it unto me.** For which purpose he hath commit-

† James iii. 17.—† Psalm lxxii. 13.—* Matth. xxv. 40.

ted a larger share of temporal enjoyments; which ought to be a striking motive, a necessary inticement to well-doing: but alas! instead of it, too frequently wealth becomes subservient to the purposes of pride, luxury, and wickedness: and therefore, our LORD remarks in another place, *how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven.*† And the Apostle James says, *Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl, for your miseries that shall come upon you; your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten; your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you; the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; the cries of them which have reaped, have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.*‡

If the extent of thy stewardship, O man! is increased, thy obligations to thy master are still greater; if thou hast received additional blessings from the GOD of bounty, it is a trust which calleth upon thee to distribute with an unsparing hand. O then, ye who are thus favoured! maintain a steady endeavour to discharge your duty in the sight of your Creator; deceive not yourselves with a belief that happiness consisteth in the multitude of your possessions, since they bring with them their dangers as well as obligations to duty; but like fountains of water which supply the little streams, *be ready to distribute, willing to communicate:*|| this being the way to lay up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come; that ye may lay hold on eternal life.

† Mat. xix. 23, 24. — Mark x. 23. — ‡ James v. 1. —
* 1 Tim. 17, 18, 19.

I have known some men, and even women, who have thought the ground scarce worthy to receive the pressure of their feet; divested of all the ties and tenderness of humanity, and wholly puffed up with *vanity and lies*; but as the reign of such is short, and not even then without its pains, and *their end miserable*, as in many parts of the sacred records we are assured; may there be none such here present; on the contrary, let it be a part of your constant care, not only to feel the distresses of others, but to visit, and be convinced, and in a manner *share* the necessities of the poor and needy; to soften the anguish of their afflicted minds, to alleviate their hidden griefs, and to dry up the eyes of those that weep; and the tears which stream, “ *as faithful stewards of the manifold grace of God; having fervent charity; knowing that charity shall cover a multitude of sins. Using hospitality one towards another without grudging; in proportion as ye have received the gift,† removing far from you vanity and lies; and contenting yourselves with being fed with food that is convenient for you.*”

Some that are present, may think this unreasonable doctrine, and be ready to reply, “ I have a family to provide for, and therefore I must embrace every opportunity of acquiring, and laying up all my acquisitions in store for them; and should I neglect the present, the like may never happen again in the course of my life.”

Such or the like arguments are often too readily taken up, and obstinately urged, in opposition to

† 1 Pet. iv. 8, 9, 10.

the most important concern; to the unspeakable prejudice of themselves, of the dispositions and morals of their children in particular, and of human society in general: how quick is the transition of many from a state of health to the grave! "*Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee!*"† was formerly pronounced to one of this kind by the great Judge of all men. Consider then, it may be thy case; and art thou prepared against thy dying hour, to render him such an account, as will then support thee, and justify thee in thy claim to the inheritance of his everlasting kingdom, by thy having faithfully sought it, and attended to the conditions thereof, preferably to all the dearest objects of this uncertain, and momentary state of existence?

I am fully of opinion, many who run after the world with open mouth, and that mouth scarce ever closed, till death closes it; could they be induced to yield some of their precious moments to timely and serious reflection; would endeavour to withdraw themselves from transitory things, at least before their last moments of life; and in some measure, prepare (after this manner) to meet their God.

They would now and then retire, for a short space at least, from the world, before they entirely left it; frequently sit down, and seriously turn their view towards another world, another state of being, into which they can never hope to carry wealth, or honours; toward that approaching dread tribunal of righteousness, where there will gain no favour.

† Luke xii. 20.

When

When we take a survey of the world, and look back through the generations that are past, we see that the love of vanity, wealth, and grandeur, hath prov'd from time to time the *ruin* even of the fairest empires and monarchies, which have been ever erected on the face of the earth: *one reformation* after another, and *one state* after another, have been destroy'd from the *pride and dissipation* inherent in the minds of governors and teachers.

How ought this consideration to humble the hearts, and redouble the vigilance of such as are placed in *exalted stations*!

I hope and trust our love, as a people in general, hath not been confined peculiarly to ourselves; but extended, as it ought to be, to all our fellow-creatures; to relieve poverty and distress, according to our abilities; to prevent and reclaim from the infinite danger and harms of impiety, and to encourage every kind of real virtue.

Though some families may have turn'd aside into the state of the world, and become engrossed with the love of its pleasures and enjoyments; yet many others, I hope, and believe, have denied themselves; have *laid hold of the good word of life*; and under its influence, pursued *the one thing needful*. Though some have declined, and even refused, the subjection due to their Maker, as if they had asked with insolence, "Who is this LORD, that he should reign over our hearts?" and had added, "We know no power equal to that of getting wealth, and honours;"—yet others have not departed from the obligations of fear and love; but have made proper reflections,

reflections, paid just respect to the great Author of their being; and manifested it by a steady watchfulness in conduct, which I most earnestly desire, may become the happy case of every one of my fellow-creatures.

The present solemn occasion is an important lesson of instruction to us all! The departure of the disembodied soul, from this world, to another; which methinks should entirely prevent our setting too great a value upon all temporal possessions.

I have sometimes been present in a dying hour; I have been present at a scene of humbling distress; I have seen in some, the closing period of a regular life of virtue: yet such a life, as on account of outward poverty, had been despised and overlooked—a whole life spent, in which its happiest moments would have past for miserable, in the minds of thousands: yet when they have finished their course, they have experienced triumphant joy, in the blessed hope and assurance of eternal life! through the merits of their *dear Redeemer*.

I have also beheld, on the other hand, the habitations of splendour exhibit a mournful scene of distress, far different from the former! Then, when the solemn approach of death hath begun to appear, attended with all its tremblings and fearful apprehensions of an after state! when the soul, agonizing in its pains, hath viewed things in a far different light to what it had before done, when even the riches, in which it had long trusted, fell short of giving the least satisfaction: no hope of future happiness afforded to the possessor! but, on the contrary,
a gloomy

a gloomy prospect of despair; of an eternal state of misery! of this have I been made a sorrowful witness, that some have gone out of the world, *without God; without hope;** without one comfortable reflection from the sacred ransom of a *dying Saviour!*

In vain have they ardently wished, in an expiring hour, that they might have been permitted to lengthen out their allotment of life, a little longer; that they might have but a short space of added time afforded them, for the important purpose of repentance, and amendment of life; for *feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, and visiting the sick*; virtues, to which they had no pretence, in any of their past hours, and which then it proved too late for them to attain, however necessary, for their standing approved at the just judgment, to which they were approaching.

May we all therefore learn instruction, from examples like these; and derive such advantage from this present solemnity; seeking and embracing *the good word of life*; and ever stedfastly adhering to it, so long as we continue in mutability.

‘ May we never withdraw ourselves from watchful attention to the guidance of divine Providence; never indulge ourselves in arrogance, or trust too much to the rectitude of our own hearts; but *pray without ceasing*, † that we may be enabled to *do works meet for repentance*; ‡ and thereby attain an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God!

* Eph. ii, 12.—† 1 Thess. v. 17.—‡ Mat. iii. 8.

Once more suffer me to intreat you, my friends, in great good will, often seriously to reflect upon the importance of the petition which I have thus far endeavoured to enforce—" *Two things have I required of thee, O Lord! deny me them not before I die.*" As I am fully satisfied it is not and will not be sufficient for me, though I should stand ever so eminently high, on the account of riches, or honours, in the esteem or applause of men; " *Remove therefore, far from me vanity and lies; giving me neither poverty nor riches; but feed me, I pray thee, with food convenient for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*"

Ever beware of the first admission of evil. Guard the avenues of your hearts; make it your peculiar study so to *number your days*, as to *apply your hearts unto wisdom*; † and to advance therein keep the account of your passing moments with greater exactness than you would wish to do of your most important temporal concerns.

'Tis an usual saying, *That short reckonings make long friends*: continue this short and frequent reckoning; ever esteeming *the numbering of your days aright*, to be the most necessary and blessed exercise; that hereby ye may be in a continual readiness for your final removal, how sudden soever it may be permitted.

Some of you are doubtless truly sensible of the importance of thus acquiring the divine favour;

† Psal. xc. 12.

continue to *keep your hearts* in this frame *with all diligence, for out of them proceed the issues of life* : * remember too that as we are a people who have been frequently blamed for departing from set forms, how necessary therefore it is for us all to keep up, in the very innermost recesses of our hearts, the daily sacrifices of prayer and praise, of fervent mental supplications, reverently to offer them to the *Father who seeth in secret and rewardeth openly* : † and let us never forget, that if the mind once gets off its guard, and relaxes in its earnest pursuit of the divine favour, the enemy is then most watchful to enter and to seduce. May you all therefore keep within the verge of innocency ; and ever let your morning oblations, and evening sacrifices, accompany your spirits to the throne of grace.

Ye rising tender youth, of whom there is a number in this city, for whose welfare I am at this time, and believe shall ever remain, anxiously solicitous :

May grace, mercy and peace, attend you through the succeeding steps of your lives ! May the Father of infinite mercy still accompany your spirits ! May you live in the perfect love and fear of him ; making constant, daily enquiry into your immortal states ; always remembering that you must one day fall beneath the stroke of death ! May your evening and morning sacrifices, therefore, of fervent prayer, and of a sincere and stedfast devotion, be constantly directed up to your Creator ! Assuring yourselves that in casting your care upon, and trusting in him, he will remember you in his divine love ; that he will

* Prov. iv. 23.—† Mat. vi. 6.

*remove vanity and lies far from you, and feed you with food convenient for you; * that in blessing he will bless you; and in multiplying he will multiply his favours towards you; crowning you in the end with joy unspeakable, and full of glory!†*

To conclude, let us all treasure up in our minds, and firmly retain this comfortable assurance, *Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily there is a God, that judgeth in the earth.*

* Gen. xxii. 17.—† Pet. i. 8.

A PRAYER

A PRAYER *after the foregoing Discourse.*

IT is unto Thee, the author of all our mercies, thou most glorious and holy one! that we presume to have recourse; and with the deepest humility and resignation of mind, to acknowledge thy present blessings, and the diffusion of thy wisdom and goodness, with gratitude, reverence, and feeling submission! As Thou best knowest what is best for us, we beg that we may be continually favoured with thy providential and fatherly dispensations; and with that mercy which sanctifies them, which renders them most highly instructive and useful to us: that hence we may enjoy inward peace in the time of outward trouble: we beseech Thee thus to carry on and complete our sanctification and salvation, that in thy appointed time we may attain *an endless inheritance with the saints in light.**

We humbly request that *all things may work together for good to those* † that are afflicted: may they profitably listen to the instructive voice of affliction; and those who enjoy prosperity, alike improve, from the language of every mercy!

Establish us, we pray Thee, upon the holy immoveable foundation of thy ever-blessed and unchangeable truth; Thou that hast been with us, and remember'd us; and hast open'd our hearts for thy

* Col. i. 12.—† Rom. viii. 28.

admission,

admission, through the virtue of thy heavenly power and divine love. We pray Thee, in the name and spirit of thy dear Son, to direct us in the several succeeding steps of our lives; to preserve us in an humble dependence and holy trust in thy power: and may we be continually favour'd to make mention of thy name with joy and gladness of heart.

Lay thy hand, we pray Thee, upon such as are captivated *with vanity and lies*, before they depart hence, and be seen of men no more; to lead them *out of darkness into thy marvellous light*:* let the voice of the holy spouse reach the immortal part, in such, with that comfortable and refreshing language, "Arise my love, my fair one come away." Lead them, we pray, yet further and further, in the *path of righteousness*†, to the *perfecting of holiness in thy fear*;‡ and let *thy rod and thy staff*, evermore, *comfort them* || therein; that they may not *lag behind*, as in the wilderness; but in humble steady obedience, persevere, with *holy circumspection*; being thankful for all thy providential distributions, and ever patiently pronouncing the divine language of *Thy will be done!*

Enable thy ministers, with power and authority, to exalt thy name with additional strength; that through their faithful labours, as instruments in thy hand, thy sacred light may arise and abundantly spread upon the habitations of darkness! O most gracious Being! Thou that *workest in us to will and to do, according to thy good pleasure*,§ we pray Thee,

* 1 Pet. ii. 9. — † Prov. viii. 20. — ‡ 2 Cor. ii. 1. — || Psalm xxiii. 4.—§ Phil. ii. 13.

bring

bring all to thy temple; and enable them acceptably to worship Thee therein. Humble their hearts in full obedience to thy word, *lead them in the way everlasting!** Let the first dawn of their morning, the whole course of their day, and the close of their evening, be continually directed towards Thee!

O Thou! by whom the voice of supplication is with all readiness admitted, even from the unworthiest of thy creatures! grant that over sea and land, *the dead in heart, in trespasses and sins,*† may hear thy word, feel its power in *raising them to newness of life,*‡ and be finally admitted to the fellowship and communion of saints in thy kingdom!

For thy great name's sake, and for thy dear son's sake, remember all the inhabitants of this city; and those, in particular, who are now met in this place: that, through the favour of thy light and help, they may move in their several classes agreeable to the injunctions of thy holy word. Do Thou, we pray Thee, animate and preserve thy ministers, elders, and heads of families; may they *be sober, and hope to the end;*|| discharging their duties to Thee, themselves, their households, and the public: having on *the helmet of salvation, the breast-plate of righteousness, the shield of faith, and sword of the spirit; and having their feet shod, with the preparation of the gospel of peace.*§

Speak peace, we beseech Thee, O sovereign author of peace! to all that *are labouring and heavy*

* Psalm cxxxix. 24. — † Eph. ii. 1. — ‡ Rom. vi. 4. — || 1 Pet. i. 13. — § Eph. vi. 15, 16, 17.

laden;

laden; tossed and not comforted;† still the perturbations of their minds, when arising and swelling, like the raging waves of the sea; though the waves toss and roar, let them not prevail and pass over them.‡*

Now to Thee, whose goodness, mercy, and marvellous power, the tongues and thoughts of the most grateful and perfect of thy creatures here below, have ever fallen short of expressing or conceiving; to Thee, with the immaculate lamb, the son of thy bosom, be deservedly and justly ascribed, as is most due, all honour and glory through the succeeding pilgrimage of our lives; and when we shall no longer remain sojourners here upon earth, may we be admitted to continue the inexhaustible theme, in the boundless habitations of thy everlasting glory, world without end. *Amen.*

* Mat. xi, 28.—† Isai. liv. 11.—‡ Jer. v. 22.

The following Discourse was delivered at the Quarterly Meeting at French-Hay, near Bristol, the 26th of the fifth Month, 1767, in the Morning.

*A garden inclosed is my sister, my Spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.**

THE whole book of Canticles is understood and taken in the way of similitude, or metaphor, setting forth that close connection, that near and dear relation, which eternally subsists between CHRIST and his church; and in this sense it certainly conveys instruction, very profitable, as well as very delightful, to that mind which hath dedicated itself to the love and obedience of him, its only rightful LORD.

The Church is called a Fountain of Gardens;† which seems to me very evidently to imply that inclosed collected strength, beauty, regularity; those consolatory refreshments; that steady firmness of thought, unity of heart, and divine affection, which becomes a people that well understand what is meant by the solemn injunction of girding up the loins of their minds:‡ well apprized of the state of their pil-

* Cant. iv. 12. — † iv. 15. — ‡ 1 Pet. i. 13.

grimage;

*grimage; of the nature, end, and design of their being; of the necessity of watchfulness unto prayer;** of having their minds brought into, and established in, the lovely order of the gospel; *their loins girded; their faculties circumscribed,* and directed to the proper purpose, the great and glorious end of their being; within the limits of that holy frame of mind, which hath *a fountain of gifts,†* preparatory to every kind of useful service, for the comfort of individuals, and the united benefit of the whole body; ever abiding in the *fear of the Lord*, which is *the beginning of wisdom:‡* the most perfect wisdom, by which the mind is kept clean, and preserved in its proper cloathing.

For *the fear of the Lord*, as the Psalmist expresses it, *is clean, and endureth for ever:||* and if this fear continues to rest upon our minds, it will assuredly keep them clean; and more and more illuminate them to discern the propriety and fitness of this language of CHRIST to his church: *A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse, my church; erected and preserved by my power, my followers united to me, and all dear to one another, “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works.‡”*

May we therefore all separately, each for ourselves, attend to this state, and become acquainted with that degree of resemblance of such an inclosed garden which we bear, in the sight of Him, who at one view sees the several conditions of men, and beholds the state of his whole creation!

* 1 Pet. iv. 7.—† Prov. i. 7, and 9, 10.—‡ James iii. 13, &c.—|| Psalm xix. 9.—† 1 Pet. ii. 9.

|| If we are inclosed, of what nature is our inclosure? since nothing less will become our sufficient defence, than the surrounding arm of the Almighty! He is the strength of every individual that rightly trusts in him: their situation is aptly described in *holy writ*, in many parts of it, by a variety of lively and beautiful figures; as here, by that of a *garden inclosed*, or *fountain of gardens*.|| They likewise joyfully experience, in this sense of the text, what was meant by the song that was predicted to be sung in the land of *Judah*, when the divine covenant should happily cement, and inclose that favoured people in a state of innocence, integrity and love, enjoying together the lasting and unutterable sweets of divine protection and peace. *In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks:* * and I cannot but intreat that all present, who are come to years of mature consideration, especially, may obey the call of God; come out of a state of sin, and neglect of duty, and become *fellow-citizens with the saints* † of this city; a city that hath sure foundations; ‡ being built upon *that rock*, which the gates of hell § have never been able to prevail against.

O you that are in the bloom of life, and surrounded with the impetuous waves of divers passions; who continue yet uncorrected, unrefined by divine grace; may you diligently and seriously reflect upon your extreme want of resemblance to *the garden inclosed*; and of answering thereby the gracious design of your Maker concerning you! May you be directed

|| Cant. iv. 15. — * Isaiah xxvi. 1. — † Eph. ii. 19. —
‡ Heb. xi. 14. — § Matth. xvi. 18.

by the still small voice, || which the LORD God will make use of, and meet you with *in the garden*; * in order to reclaim you, and to draw you to himself! May all that stand in slippery places, make him their refuge, that they may know him, to calm every tumult in the mind; to crown them with the joys of obedience; and to direct their steps aright through life, to his honour, and their own true and lasting happiness!

May all who mourn for want of a place of rest, attain this happy situation, all who are ready to cry out as one formerly did, "*Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesbech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar.*" † Woe is me for this state of wickedness, with which I am now on every side surrounded; both that of my own, and that of others round about me! who are ready to fear *the harvest is past, the summer is ended*: ‡ and that they are not gathered into the city walled with salvation; or the garden inclosed with divine beauty, with united and unfading joy!

I hope better things for those whose concern sometimes appears likely to become more than they are able to bear, even a concern, lest they should be excluded from an inheritance with the sanctified.

He that of old made *the mountains skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs*, § for the miraculous preservation of his people, even when they had begun to despair of their deliverance; can still equally effect the like glorious work in restoring the desponding,

|| 1 Kings xix. 12.—* Gen. iii. 8. — † Psalm cxx. 5.—
‡ Jer. viii.—§ Psalm cxiv. 4.

the broken in heart; that, having been too much off their watch, have from thence been the more subject to be *tost about by every wind of doctrine*,† and cunning craftiness of men; whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Know that though your own resolutions, your own strength, and wisdom, have been insufficient (in the days that are past) for your security; and perhaps the strongest resolutions, that you have hitherto made, have been written in dust; so that the next gale of temptation hath blown them away; and you have hence been carried further and further, into a state of groaning captivity, and crying distress! and have been unable to lift up your heads in the day of trial: know, that the duly humble and repenting sinner hath ever been graciously received; and the diffident have become cloathed with divine strength, through the name and power of the LORD JESUS; their minds have been brought into a holy frame, having entered within the celestial inclosure and defence.

O that the salvation of Israel would come out of Sion, then should Jacob rejoice, and Israel should be right glad. This hath been the sacred language of individuals that have at times been tost in uncertainty, distressed in vanity, wickedness and disappointment; who, notwithstanding, have been at last happily fixed within the habitation of *the holy city, or garden inclosed*; through a steady perseverance and strong resistance, though in the night season; like Jacob, who as a prince, *prevailed with God and with men*.* So the sincere, the penitent sinner, in his resolute and patient conflict, imploring and relying on di-

† Eph. iv. 12.—* Gen. xxxii. 28.

vine help, will at length obtain an assured victory, to his great joy, and returning of thanksgiving to the author of all his mercies.

*A Garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; ah, too unthinking youth! how widely different from this state is too many of yours! To you appears particularly applicable that antient call from God, Keep silence before me, oh ye islands!** I beseech you, in this your time of danger, when your minds may be compared to floating islands, blown upon and covered with a succession of waves, surrounded with temptations of various kinds, that are perpetually withdrawing you from that most precious interest, which CHRIST hath purchased for you in *the garden inclosed*; I beseech you, that you maintain a steady dependence upon him; that ye be vigilant in your pursuit after eternal enjoyments; that ye stand upon your guard against the wiles of the grand enemy to your salvation; remembering that even *when the sons of God have met together, Satan hath presented himself amongst them.*†

Doth thy mind watch with holy diligence to prayer? being fervent in spirit, that though the enemy may endeavour to come in as a flood of corruption, and seek incessantly to draw thee from the strong hold of that city, *whose walls are salvation, and whose gates are praise*;‡ the arm of omnipotence may defend thee: know, thou art no farther guilty than as thou joinest with the temptation; it is no sin to be tempted; the holy everlasting bridegroom of the true church, was himself tried, proved, tempted before

* Isaiah xli. 1.—† Job. i. 6.—‡ Isaiah lx. 18.

thee,

thee, time after time, *by the ruler of the darkness of this world, the prince of the power of the air*; yet he continued unmoved, unwearied; being supported and sustained by the power of God: *He was like unto us in all things, sin only excepted*; † he knows and is willing to sustain them that are tempted; and to encourage in the day of battle, every one that cleaveth unto, and calleth upon him, with full purpose of heart, in the whole course and conduct of his life: though he may be deeply proved, and may sometimes be ready to cry out, “Even though the gates of death may appear to be in motion against me, and just opening to receive me, yet if I die, Oh let it be at thy feet.”

This hath been the language of minds, in the day of temptation; and when the battle hath been hot, they have known a secret hiding place, where the enemy could not prevail. Though he encountered the whole army of martyrs; though they were tempted, trod upon, buffeted, and even crucified; yet it was never in his power to subdue them; they were still succour'd by the hand of the Almighty; they were enabled to *fight the good fight of faith*; * to pass through all their *fiery trials* with patience; and, in honour of their victory, are now *crowned with glory*!

How beautiful, how amiable, must be *those gardens inclosed*, the rising youth, in the vigour and prime of life! when their minds are circumscribed, and animated to piety; when they have upon them the indubitable proofs of the handy work of God;

† Heb. iv. 15.—* 1 Tim. vi. 12.

standing immoveably upright on the side of religion and virtue; keeping out all the works of darkness, by walls of divine erection!

How excellent are these gardens inclosed! their conversation and behaviour, how edifying! how exemplary! how truly honourable! their admission is *sure into that glorious house, not made with hands,*† to a perpetual festival, an eternal fruition of the unspeakably rich rewards of their good works, which they have been enabled to perform, to the glorifying of their Father who is in heaven.

Than such a blessed society as this, I know of nothing that can possibly be deemed more amiable upon the face of the earth; nothing more consistent with the design of *heaven*; or more resembling its own happiness, for those that are young to remember *their Creator in the days of their youth,*† with a continual reverence; and to give up their hearts to him, in the perfection of love; for the most desirable part of the whole creation to live thus, amidst the bloom and lustre of the spring time of life, is to constitute the *beauty of holiness!* the one great ornament of the garden of the LORD here on earth!

Ye heads of families; fathers, mothers, and guardians, that preside over and sustain the various relations in domestic life; ever carefully prosecute your own eternal happiness, and the happiness of all those over whom you are placed in charge! exhorting them in tender affection, and encouraging them by worthy example, to *set their affections on things*

† 2 Cor. v. 1.—† Eccles. xii. 1.

above; † watchfully guarding, and even confining them, in order to preserve them from all harms and corruptions of vice, *as gardens inclosed within the limits of that holy fear, which is a fountain of life, that preserves from the snares of death,** and prepares for a crown of glory, in the regions of eternal felicity!

When the ties of nature become joined with the ties of grace, and together rest upon the minds of parents and guardians; they cannot but be solicitous that their offspring and charge may be favoured in an eminent degree with divine preservation: they would then earnestly desire to help them forward in their way, being qualified to say to the rising generation, "Follow me, as I follow CHRIST." I am persuaded, had this been more generally the case, had they themselves, I say, really lived *as gardens inclosed within the bounds of divine wisdom and government*, our christian society would have worn a different aspect to what it now does. Could parents and heads of families from time to time have appealed to the Searcher of Hearts, for the uprightness of their intentions, and the rectitude of their conduct in these most important concerns, then might they have said with holy confidence, *Lord! now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation! †*

What think ye parents? ye that live as it were in a state of stupefaction; what think ye of the important moment, when in the sight of God, angels, and men, inquisition for blood shall be made? what

† Col. iii. 2.—* Prov. xiii. 14.—† Luke ii. 29, 30.

think

think ye of the preparation of rendering that account with joy, at the dread tribunal of final judgment? in which an inquiry into the discharge of your several duties, in this respect, will most assuredly be made?—It is possible, and indeed I cannot but believe it consistent with the goodness of the Supreme Being; that, where the natural parents have been negligent in the discharge of this important trust, and have conducted their offspring into bye-ways and crooked paths, forgetful of the way that leadeth to life eternal; the everlasting Father hath not been wholly unmindful of his children, thus abandoned to the wiles of the destroyer; but hath frequently reached forth a kind hand to such, and will continue to make up to them, who gratefully receive his kindness, and obey his voice, the deficiency of such past parental care; even by the virtue of his living power in their hearts: in the mean time, the very criminal neglect of such parents will, notwithstanding this, draw down on them its own weight of condemnation: *the hand writing on the wall* will still remain against them; and, like wicked *Belshazzar*, they will be *weighed in the balance*, and *found wanting*. †

Indeed it must be confessed, and I am thoroughly assured, that all parents are not thus negligent: I cannot but remember the inestimable father I had in early life; and above all things his almost *unexampled care and tenderness over his infant offspring*. I well remember the *very* powerful and moving eloquence of descending tears! when he collected his numerous family of little ones about him, and in the

† Dan. v. 5, 27.

time of our extreme tenderness, and very early years, how often he hath wept over us, when he hath been recommending us to the throne of grace! though I cannot repeat the immediate language he utter'd, upon these occasions, which were so extremely interesting to us all!

I wandered, as to myself indeed I may say, and strayed from the *garden inclosed*, in many of the succeeding steps of my life: and even now stand *as a monument of mercy amongst you!* whilst I thus afresh remember and recite this amazing instance of a tender parent's anxious and unabated care, for our preservation out of the evils that abound in the world; for our having a safe place within the inclosures, where *Christ feedeth his flock, and maketh them to rest at noon!* †

O fathers and mothers! I beseech you, by the mercies of God, and the solemn account you must one day close with him; that you lay this charge seriously to heart; still offering up your humble petitions to the *Father of light*, that he will enable you, more and more, to instruct the children he hath blessed you with, in *the one thing needful*; in order that being thus favoured, thus enlightened and enlarged by his power, you may have nothing to do but die, when that time shall arrive; nothing to charge yourselves with, in relation to the neglect of this great duty, when the measure of your days shall be accomplished; but may render up your accounts *with joy*, and receive the beatific sentence of *Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been*

† Cant. i. 7.

faithful

faithful in a little ; I will make thee ruler over more ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.†

A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse.—May we pay all due honour to the testimony of CHRIST respecting his church, both as individuals, as heads of families, and parents of children : and more and more sustain with diligence and propriety in all our several stations, the character of gardens inclosed ; or be as plants therein, of the Lord's own right hand planting ; plentifully adorn'd and enrich'd with all the good fruits of his own spirit ; that we may be, as our fathers were in the day when the LORD raised them up, fed, and miraculously supported them ! and may fervently pray, *that Sion might arise, and shine, and shake herself from the dust of the earth ; and put on her beautiful garments !** and that many amongst us, who yet need it, might shake themselves from those outward things that adorn them ; as they vainly imagine, that *that divine beauty and lustre* which once conspicuously shined upon and adorned *our Sion*, may again be restored, and continue to dwell amongst us : and in order to this, may we study more and more the increase of righteousness and true holiness ; encouraging one another by good example and by tender counsel in the pursuit thereof ; as we cannot, consistent with our love of GOD, be indifferent in our wishes for the happiness and welfare of any of our fellow creatures ; nor say of our brother, “ Let him alone, leave him to himself, “ it is sufficient for me to mind myself.” Since it is our immediate duty to watch over him ; and to be ready, on every occasion, tenderly to advise and

† Matth. xxv. 21.—* Isaiah lii. 1, 2. lx. 1.

assist; to prevent or support him; and not answer the LORD, when he shall require an account of his welfare from me; *Am I my brother's keeper?* †

At this door, my friends, unspeakable damage hath enter'd, and widely spread amongst us a people; even through this neglect, the grand deceiver hath the more easily broke into this and the other family; the power of seduction hath taken place; and many young people may be said to have laid violent hands on their own souls, and those of others too, in their gradual stepping out of the garden inclosed.

“ *Am I my brother's keeper?* What have I to do with the welfare of another?” This hath greatly obstructed the increase of our felicity, as a collective body; the progress of our Sion; and introduced the destroyer; who hath broke into our inclosure, and made a sorrowful devastation among the flock and family of God. Where I see thus the danger of the hedge (*which the Lord in mercy made about us!*) being broke down; I cannot help expressing my concern, and using my speedy and vigilant efforts to prevent, as much as possible, the beginning and increase of so great an evil.

Is there even a servant lad, or a servant girl that hath continued neglected, and their minds left to wander at will? I cannot but feel for them, with an earnest desire of informing such, and drawing them, if possible, within the limits of the garden inclosed; that they might enjoy the benefit and delightful assurance of immortal happiness, from their entrance

† Gen. iv. 6.

into, and continuance in well doing! Many fly from their own interest, forget the God that made them, and even *account the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing*, † for want of having their minds properly centered, and their judgments duly enlightened; and therefore it is all your duty, who are advanced within the heavenly bounds, and are grown up into a capacity of service, so faithfully to improve your talents, that ye may become instrumental, to enlighten their understanding, and to administer to them a suitable degree of spiritual health: not to say, *Am I my brother's keeper?* but if ye love God, to love your brother also; to lead him within the heritage and limits of the inclosed garden; within the *impregnable defence of that city whose walls are salvation*.

I know well, friends, that though my education was within the garden inclosed, yet I wandered far from it; and in my departing, laid myself open to the enemy of my soul. I kept the worst of company; I subjected myself to almost every temptation; broke through the fence of the sacred inclosure! trampled it under my feet! and when for a time I found the least inclination to do good, evil was present with me! and I went on from one degree of it to another! my wickedness so far increased with my diligence, that at length, alas! I beheld the strong wall broken down! the garden wall destroyed! the mound left defenceless! and no hopes left of returning peace to my afflicted soul!

O ye, who are the hopes of the next generation! the steps I have trod warrant me to expostulate with,

† Heb. x. 29

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and to warn you of the most dreadful danger of that deviation, to which youth is too prone, for want of due and timely reflection, suitable to its vast importance; and the extreme difficulty of treading back, or extricating yourselves from it, when the mind is once engaged and entered into the path of folly: believe me, now is your acceptable time; now is the day of the LORD's tender mercy afforded to you: flatter not yourselves therefore with the hope of its being time enough, that in some future part of your lives you will diligently seek him: now is your seed time; your hour of profitable diligence; and not in the decline of life. Life frequently is held by a moment of time! it passes, and man is no more seen! *All flesh is grass, and its beauty as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth**. The grave, to which we are all hastening, ought to be an early lesson of serious instruction, sounding the alarm in the ears of every youth; seeing it is frequently open'd to receive its victims in the very bloom of life; and *before the years draw nigh*, in which, in the course of nature, *they can take no pleasure*†——*boast not therefore thyself of to-morrow*, since *thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*;‡ but rather let the example of others teach thee the absolute necessity of improving the present moments; and duly to reflect upon the imminent danger of delay.

If thy delight be not now within the *garden in* closed, thou canst not reasonably expect hereafter to do *works meet for repentance*: || believe me, the even-

* I a. x'. 6.—† Ecclef. xii. 1.—‡ Prov. xxvii. 1.—|| Acts xxvi. 2c.

ing hour will have its fill of work, even after discharging the duty of the most diligent day; though you begin this necessary work immediately, thou wilt not have a moment to spare when thy sands of life are hastening to a close, and thou art finally appointed to tread the silent and solemn path of death! which is an hour that will, doubtless, bring with it a sufficient employment to the most serious mind, and to the most assiduous improver of the time that hath been allotted him in mutability.

O then, ye beloved youth! that your minds may be thus properly exercised to lay hold on the things that belong to your everlasting peace! may you lay these reflections seriously to heart; and may their good effects demonstrate that they have a powerful and proper influence upon your conduct, through the whole series of your lives; that ye may finish your course with joy! and be crown'd in the end with glory and immortality! having faithfully answer'd the boundless love of CHRIST to his church, whose peculiar relation to himself he expresseth in this endearing language, *A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.*

A PRAYER

A PRAYER *after the foregoing Discourse.*

WE approach thy presence, O Father of infinite kindness, and make mention of thy name, in a deep and awful sense of thy mercy, which hath followed us from time to time, and most graciously encouraged us, even to open our hearts before Thee! the LORD of Heaven, and the whole earth!

We were *cast upon rocks*, and there left in a destitute and perishing state; when thou manifested thy tender regard, stretched forth thy delivering hand, and fed and sustained us by thy watchful Providence! Thou wast pleased to look upon us in mercy, in the days of our temporal calamities! to reveal to us the saving arm of thy power, and to cause those very calamities to turn to our solid advantage! Thou, who art encircled with light, didst enlighten our darkness; gave us clearly to understand the great things of thy law; such of them as thou in thy wisdom saw necessary for us. In the day of our utmost need, thou wast pleased to appear for us, and to speak *comfort* to our afflicted states!

We earnestly beg, that the grateful sense of all these thine unutterably kind dealings with us, may be imprinted on our hearts in *characters never to be obliterated!* What more have we to ask, but that thou may ever continue to guide and direct us! that such a sense of thy unmerited mercies may be to us, as often heretofore it hath been, an enlivening comfort,

fort, and a strong support in the day of trouble: and we beseech thee, O blessed Father! to remember all in the like situation: send forth *thy light and thy truth* even amongst those who have never known, or have long forgotten thee. We pray thee, draw them into thy holy house; plant them in thine inclosed, for ever beautiful and most excellent garden! their hearts becoming hereby powerfully inclined to attend with a fixed and unlimited submission, to the salutary discipline of thine omnipresent, and unerring wisdom!

If thou see any cast upon the bed of languishing, do thou be pleased, we humbly pray thee, to afford them the visitation of thy love: let thy divine consolation be their continual attendant; whereby they may be indued with perfect resignation to thy blessed will!

O thou! that hast poured into our hearts, the fresh and reviving sense of thy unbounded love; accept we beseech thee, our prayers for our own preservation, and the lifting up of our hands for one another, for the gathering together of many to thy self; who art, and hast been, the restorer of many that have been *scattered abroad*, that have *gone astray*, being seduced by various temptations, from thy *sacred truth*.

For thy great Name's sake, for thy dear Son's sake, and for the sake of thy glorious cause of righteousness! we pray thee, remember the offspring of thy people; incline and strengthen them more and more, to turn towards thee; and to *run the race that*

*that is set before them ; * that in the places of the honourable fathers, removed to thy kingdom, may succeed their sons ; steadily walking in their footsteps, to the glory of thy name ; that generation to generation may tell thy acts, and age to age pronounce thy goodness and marvelous power ; who, through manifold temptations and trials, preserve them unpolluted from the world, them who trust in thee, and adhere to the dictates of thy grace !*

Be with the people assembled here at this time ; and in a particular manner with those that are thine in heart, and dedicated to thy service. Endue, we pray thee, with the spirit of sound judgment, *those that sit in judgment ;* and strengthen those who are enlisted into thine army, *engaged under thy banner, and that turn the battle to the gate,* that they may so act, and *so fight the good fight of faith,* † as to lay hold on eternal life ! which thou art now, in this the day of thy mercy, freely offering unto all !

May the ministers and stewards of thy word, cheerfully proceed in thy glorious cause, speaking powerfully in wisdom to all, that many may become through their calls, yet more and more ardently inclined to listen to the doctrine of thy Son, and to be instructed in thy law immediately from his internal voice in their own hearts.

O holy and infinite Father of all our mercies ! grant we beseech thee, that being preserved in our stations, as those who are *risen with Christ, our affections may be set on things which are above,* and our

* Heb. xii. 1.—† 1 Tim. vi. 12.

life hid with them in thee our God, that *when he who is our life shall appear, we also may appear with him in glory!*†

May all our faculties, and all that is within us, bless thy great and excellent name; may we perpetually approach thy throne with confidence, to offer thee the oblation of humble prayer, and grateful praise and thanksgiving, now, henceforth, and for ever, world without end! *Amen.*

† Coloss. iii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

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*The following Discourse was publicly delivered at Leeds,
the 26th of the sixth Month, 1769.*

IT is not in the *oldness of the letter*,* or in unfeeling formality, but from the animating warmth of gospel love, that I salute this assembly in these expressions;

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you
all always. Amen.†*

It is the constant language of that evangelical spirit, from which arises this tribute of *Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will to men,‡* and which I am thankful to feel not restrained within less compass than the bulk of mankind; but zealously and ardently pointing towards all such as profess faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and a hope of salvation by him.

There is something further couched in this affectionate salutation, than the language of love; the language of Wisdom.—That wisdom which is *profitable to direct,*|| seems to me very evidently and very eminently displayed by the Father of mercy

* Rom. vii. 6. — † 2 Cor. xiii. 14. — ‡ Luke ii. 14. —
|| Eccl. x. 10.

and kindness, in these expressions; which, by divine assistance, I would endeavour a little to open, and to urge as words of some signification, unto all such whole minds are at times turned to contemplate, and not only contemplate, but also to pursue, *the things which make for peace,* †

I. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

There is no language, or form of words, sufficiently copious and expressive, though raised to the utmost extent or height of description, for representing the adorable manifestations of heavenly kindness, goodness, condescension, and mercy, or for exhibiting the things which proceed from the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST: but it is allowable to speak whereof we know, according to the measure of knowledge; and to utter, according to the proportion of strength given, what we now see in part, and what from experience we feel, of the merciful kindness of GOD; and which, as we faithfully follow his will, we shall hereafter more fully and comprehensively behold.—This I apprehend is necessary for all, to whom a revelation of the Christian Religion has been made by means of holy writ; and in an especial manner, where He that is the discoverer of states, has opened their understandings to believe the doctrines of the Christian Religion, and the sacred records of that miraculous favour and grace that came by Jesus Christ.

But for my own part, I must freely acknowledge there was a time of my life, in which I would gladly

† Rom. xiv. 19.

have relieved myself from following the arduous paths of religion, by turning aside into the paths of scepticism and infidelity. My mind was ready to alledge, as some at this time of day may be, "How can we believe without evidence? there is not a sufficient evidence of truth to convince my judgment, or to induce me to believe." I know this has been the allegation of some: but I have found there is no deficiency of evidence; but an unwillingness to admit the force of that evidence, which would properly influence the mind; and I have reason to apprehend this has been the case with others: for if there was a thorough submission, and disposition of mind to receive the truth in the love of it; to endeavour after it in its genuine simplicity; to look at it with a single eye; and, if I may be allowed the expression, to suppress or banish all the "*but*s and *ifs*;" we should soon find the evidence of the Christian Religion to be lively and incontestable, and effectually to operate to make us wise and good; wise, with the wisdom that is to salvation; and good, with the goodness that is of God, the source of goodness.

But whilst people take counsel, and not of God, and suffer themselves to be covered with a covering, and not of his Spirit,* they are unwilling to admit the force of those truths which would separate the precious from the vile, and purify us according to his word. — While this is the case that many deviate in point of faith, they may complain of the want of evidence respecting the certainty and truth of the Christian Religion; and complain with as much justice, as a

* Isaiah xxx. 1.

man who wilfully hides himself in darkness, complains of his incapacity of seeing. For we have *such* an evidence and understanding imparted by the light and grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, as doubtless abundantly displays the immediate regard and love of God, as recorded in holy writ; and from which I freely acknowledge an internal illumination *necessary*, for all that would have valid claim to the Christian Religion; whereby we obtain a firm assurance of, and a well-grounded belief in, those glorious truths.

We have sometimes been accused of allegorizing away the important truths of the Christian Religion, as recorded in holy writ: it is far, very far, from our intention or inclination! We want to *inforce* them upon ourselves, upon our brethren, with all that requisite weight which commands their belief; calling to a belief of *heart*, not a mere assent with the tongue; but *a belief of heart unto righteousness*.†

We have been distinguished, and are not ashamed of the distinction, for preaching *Christ within*; but we never preach a CHRIST within, opposed to, or derogating from, a *Christ without*.—We fully believe not only in his glorious and gracious appearance amongst the sons of men, *as in the volume of the book it is written*; * but we also believe in his inward and spiritual appearance, *the second time without sin unto salvation*; † in which we are supported by *a cloud of witnesses*, § and by the doctrine of the holy Author of the Christian Religion, inforcing his inward and spiritual manifestation (the manifestation

† Rom. x. 10.—* Heb. x. 7.—† Ibid. ix. 28.—§ Ibid. xii. 1.

of his grace) in as clear and indubitable a manner, as from the testimonies delivered concerning his external appearance.

But the mystery of ungodliness hath powerfully wrought with some who profess the Christian name, in opposition to the force of those testimonies with regard to his internal appearance, or manifestation of himself in the hearts of mankind; and to render inadmissible the doctrine of an inward and spiritual communion, the revelation of light, life, and good to the souls of men, immediately imparted for our redemption and sanctification. — This would lead people home from the flowery paths of ease and speculation, into the arduous one of practice: it would transfer religion from the *head* to the *heart*; and, in its progress, would remove every obstacle to the admission of the doctrine of an inward and spiritual manifestation of the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

But there hath been a lamentable defection from the life and spirit of true Christianity, wherein the old man, under all the pomp of opinion, and assenting to indubitable truths, still remains in full possession of every inordinate love, and his goods are at ease. A mind disguised with Jacob's voice, and Esau's hands, sound orthodox principles, with a schismatic heart, ingrosses the formalist of all names and distinctions to religion; the old man being at ease with his goods, in a state of self-sufficiency, either rejoicing under a form, and the false shade of opinion and regularity of conduct, or in the pomp of a spacious external appearance; wherein some continue possessed of an happy tranquillity or ease of mind, and are endeavouring

endeavouring to build up a tabernacle quiet and safe, content with a form, or depending upon a bare belief in the doctrines of the Christian Religion.—But there is a work, whereby the *old* earth and the *old* heavens are made to *shake*, and must be removed; which is of the adorable mercy and grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, when he thus may reveal himself;—

Yet once more will I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.†—Not only the earth, not only against the inhabitants of the earth; but the work of God is made conspicuous in the awakening of the ungodly, for their conversion from sin and death, unto righteousness and life.—*Yet once more will I shake heaven.*—The glorious specious appearances of truth, and doctrines recorded and assented to, but yet not reduced to experience; truths received and confessed by the tongue, but the heart revolting from their efficacious influence.

Yet once more will I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, *yet once more*, signifies the removing of those things which are shaken. And undoubtedly the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, in its manifestation, procedure, and effects, would shake every false rest in which any deluded soul may have fixed its repose: He would shake every false rest among those under all names and distinctions to religion, who are trusting in *name* and in *form*, without the power, or an experience of its virtual effects upon the soul; these all appertain to one family:—and not only so, but he would shake every false rest,

† Heb. xii. 27.

yea and the foundation, of those who are building upon a *profession*, and upon the Apostles *testimony* of JESUS CHRIST; because they are only building upon the *credibility* of those truths, yet cannot experimentally say, Through the grace of our LORD JESUS, *We acknowledge truth, according to godliness.* †

They that are of the world, come here also to a house fortified with *opinion*, and are supporting themselves in having obtained a clear, full, and concise knowledge of the truth of the Christian Religion. But there is a power that will search every *false foundation*, and overturn every superficial dependence on human production, that is inconsistent with the uniform tendency of his sacred law, fashioned upon the plan of unchangeable, everlasting wisdom.—It is not of man, or by man, but proceeds from the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, whereby those truths are brought home to the hearts of mankind. The gracious effects of his powerful working, are manifested to bring us home from a state of false dependence, that we may humbly and experientially acknowledge, *In God is my salvation, and my glory, the rock of my strength: * in God alone is my trust.*

But the *strong man*, armed with opinion and belief, has nevertheless been pursuing *vitiating affections*: which people have endeavoured to retain, and glossed over with a specious lofty profession; fully assenting to the truths handed forth from the experience of others, but unreduced to practice in themselves.

† Titus i. 1.—* Psal. lxxiii. 7.

While the strong man armed keeps the palace, the things that he possesseth are in peace; † until a stronger than he overcome, and cast him out with all his goods.— All those things that are inconsistent with the holiness and purity of the divine nature, which are pointed clearly out, and may be understood, by the declaration of our LORD concerning the church, wherein *every plant that is not of my heavenly father's right hand planting, shall be rooted out.* §—What would then become of all those things, which a mistaken judgment calls “but little things?” Of the pleasures and amusements of the present age; invented by the sons of dissipation, who add wings to their moments, and are carried forward with rapidity through time, unprepared, to a final judgment? What a multiplicity of those things which are *not of the Father, but of the world that lies in wickedness:* * things of which I shall not now particularly speak; but they are such as have no life in the *life* of the LORD JESUS CHRIST in man, but are ever enemies to it, while the affections are earthly, and confined to this world, however the partiality of deluded minds may think to seek a resource, and attempt to obviate the seeming rigours of the gospel; or find for themselves an easier and more flexible way, by resting upon a mere belief of *systems* (the goods belonging to the strong man armed) wherein they endeavour to support themselves, and are high in profession, but weak respecting practice! A species of deviation from the power of truth proceeding from the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, which would search the secret of every heart! It would open to the view of the attentive mind their nature, and the situation they are in;

† Luke xi. 21.—§ Matth. xv. 13.—* 1 John v. 19.

what is of God, and what is not of God; what is pure, and what is impure: It would ever prove a more decisive test in all our actions, a more certain criterion in our conduct through life, than it is to be feared the generality of Christian professors have attained, and which it is absolutely impossible for the strong man armed to produce, with all his seeming sanctity of the flesh, or strenuous support of belief, and a multitude of external performances; notwithstanding he may endeavour to plead for the *law and the commandment*, and think thereby to attain the mark of CHRIST's followers, who *walk therein all the days of their lives*.

But although they are thus lifted up in their minds, there is an omniscient and omnipresent Being, who cannot be deceived or imposed upon; and it is impossible to invalidate that invariable obligation to live under the power of the cross of CHRIST, however they may endeavour to find means, by professing his name without taking up a cross to the inordinate pleasures and pursuits of this world, or attribute to themselves the merits of his death, without a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, wherein alone we are made partakers of an everlasting glory.

I beseech you by the most powerful motive of the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that every one may endeavour to cultivate in your minds a living sense of religion; and that we may all experience the purity and sanctity of its nature to operate in our hearts; and as members of one family, though distinguished by various names, we may continue as brethren and fellow-pilgrims, in our passage through
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the wilderness of this world, to an endless glory ; that we may run with patience the arduous race, although through distress of temptation and probation, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

I beseech you by the mercies of GOD, by every powerful motive, in the language of love, the love of GOD, which lives in my heart, lay hold of the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST ; by which alone our hearts and minds can experimentally acknowledge, that it is by the virtue of it we are cleansed, purified, and redeemed from the pollutions and defilements of the world ; and whereby we become fashioned in the image of righteousness and true holiness.

Let us next consider the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST as offered for our Redemption.—And I have no doubt of its being acknowledged, by all who have any understanding of the nature of true Christianity, or care about their immortal souls, that the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST manifestly leads to the doctrine of *Repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God* ; to a redemption of the soul from death, hell, and the grave ; consequently, from that state of punishment due to sinners, where the ungodly receive the reward of their disobedience :—neither have I any doubt of our being accompanied herein by a cloud of witnesses, who *feel* the truth of the Christian Religion, and know the force and authority of those testimonies concerning it.—And let us take along with us the knowledge which the Apostles and primitive believers had of the Christian redemption and doctrine in their times, that *the*
grace

grace of God, that brings salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearance, of the grace of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.† This is the redemption proposed by the gospel, which commands our assent, and will remain obligatory throughout all ages of the Christian dispensation.

But there has been a claim to redemption, introduced in the apostasy from the Life of Religion, maintained amongst professors under various names, who plead the impossibility of being redeemed from the power of sin;—a redemption from the penalty, but not from the commission;—a redemption from the punishment, without a victory over the transgressing nature;—and herein the mystery of unrighteousness hath powerfully wrought, and still works, thus to substitute names for things, sounds instead of substance; and a profession instead of a lively possession of its powerful and virtual effects upon the mind.—But it is a redemption from *all iniquity*, whereby alone he will *purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*.

*Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.** From the worldly nature, and from the corruptions and defilements in the world.—A redemption from the power of sin;—wherein we are sanctified, and justified, in the sight

† Titus ii. 11, 12, 13, 14.—* Matth. i. 21.

of God, and are prepared for an admission into the kingdom of heaven, as we are possessed of this efficacious redemption :—*It is like unto a little leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal.**—It was operative ;—and being diffused through the three measures of meal, there was a *real, inherent* change, or partaking of its own *nature* ;—a change effected by the powerful diffusion of that leavening virtue.

This is the redemption of JESUS CHRIST ;—a redemption effected by the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.—It consists not in the strength, or change, of *opinions*, or a formal conception ;—but as we experience a gradual progression from glory to glory, and from one degree of similitude, or resemblance of the Divine Image to another, until we attain a victory here, and the consummation of happiness in a future state.

I apprehend this is the genuine nature of Christian redemption, as proposed by the gospel, which will stand the test, and bring forth the glorious fruits of *Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost* ; and wherein he will refine, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

We are not to ascribe or attribute to ourselves any *merit* of *works*, as performed in the strength of a natural understanding, or from any religious attainments ; but ever to retain a consciousness of our inability ; as knowing nothing belongs to us as creatures, but *blushing and confusion of face* ;† and that

* Mat. xiii. 33.—† Dan. ix. 7.

our growth towards perfection proceeds from the assistance dispensed of his unbounded mercy and grace; as saith the apostle, *It is by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace, which is in me, was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which is in me.*||

I have no doubt that many of your minds, under various names and distinctions to religion, have been at times touched with a feeling sense of the nature and excellency of true Christianity; with a *blessed* sense of it, proceeding from the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.—May you *so* follow on, as to experience a further progress in its efficacious operation upon your minds, and witness its leavening virtue into its own nature, drawing you from the temper and defilements of the world, by a transformation of your minds from dead works, to serve the living GOD!—wherein you would truly experience an increase in strength, derived from him to whom *all power is given*,† power to effect every excellent purpose, and fill up to you all those relative attributes which are inseparable from the divine nature; and wherein he is mercifully communicating an holy evidence of faith in the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; a faith in *things not seen, the substance of things hoped for.*†

May we be engaged in an humble dependence, and awful worship, before the GOD of heaven and earth! continually contemplate him in his adorable perfections, as the Father and Fountain of all our mercies; and faithfully regard every part of our duty in bringing *glory to God*, proposed as the mark of re-

|| 1 Cor. xv. 10.—† Matth. xxviii. 18.—† Heb. xi. 1.

demption and reconciliation, through the merits and mediation of a crucified SAVIOUR; *who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*—In this manner we become members of his sacred militant church on earth; and are entering upon the path to the triumphant church in heaven.

We were made a little lower than the angels, and intended to partake in the fruition of happiness with the spirits of just men made perfect, in the general assembly of the first-born sons of GOD. And I have no doubt but he will still beautify his footstool by the gift of his grace, the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, proceeding from himself, the Author and Fountain of good, and of every perfect work, whereunto we are called by his spirit, and become united in membership with his sanctified church and family:—So that having filled up the measure of our days in the world, we may finally receive the beatific reward of an endless life with the just of all generations.

I have no doubt of the possibility of *access* to the Father while cloathed with *mortality*, through the mediation and intercession of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.—But it is as we admit his spirit to operate in our minds to *prepare* us for access, and duly attend to the assistance afforded us.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, always!—May you be built up in his grace, and continue engaged in the contemplation of his adorable perfections! the infinite kindness and goodness of GOD! the excellency and purity of the Christian nature! and, by a separation from the world, obtain
a well-

a well-grounded hope *that he may be with you all, always. Amen.*

Yet notwithstanding an happy advancement may be known, a state of humble watchfulness is our duty, and our safety.—I cannot join with the opinion of those, who maintain the doctrine of *once in grace, ever in grace.*—I believe that it is possible for those who have been visited with a measure and manifestation of the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that have *tested the good word of life, and of the powers of the world to come, † to fall away.*—It is necessary to continue in a state of daily dependence on divine strength, for our faithful perseverance in the uniform progressive labour of a Christian life, and a daily walking with the God of our lives, to preserve us from evil.—The apostle, who seemed to entertain a requisite diffidence with regard to himself, perceived the necessity of a continuance in the communion of grace, in order to a happy conclusion; and was cautious, while he was preaching to others, *lest himself should become a cast-away.*—Let us therefore, not content ourselves that we begin and run well for a *season*; but retain upon our minds a living sense of religion, cloathed with native simplicity and purity, proceeding from the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

II. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; the love of God.*

He hath *so* loved us, and manifested his inconceivable favour towards us, that he hath not dealt with

† Heb. vi. 5.—|| 1 Cor. ix. 27.

us according to our *merits*, but of his free and unmerited grace, that we might become heirs of an endless inheritance in glory! *God so loved the world, that he sent his own son into the world to be a light to the world; a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and to be his salvation to the ends of the earth.**—It is this heavenly love, the love of God, that is the grand and solemn cement of his family, both here and hereafter: wherein we are united to him, and in fellowship one with another. It binds all into an uniform consistency, both in heaven and earth.—Many other objects of our love are local and temporary, limited to time and place, or confined to this world, and to the things that are in it: but the love of God is an *endless* commandment.—It is charity; that divine charity, that will remain when testimonies shall cease, and declarations come to an end;—in a participation whereof we shall still continue to join in holy worship and adoration unto God, the author of our being.

It is in the enjoyment of this divine and ardent charity, that the celestial inhabitants in the realms of light receive the sacred emanations of love, and enjoy the favour of God in a participation of those ineffable pleasures which it yields to the glorified assembly of saints in bliss.—And, indeed, it seems to me to be the grand source of all happiness and duty; happiness in heaven, as well as perfection of wisdom to the sons of men, derived from those gracious relative attributes of the divinity wherein he is mercifully communicating the essential part of his own nature, being, in himself, *altogether lovely*,† consummate in the perfection of holiness, and unparalleled

* Acts xiii. 47.—† Cant. v. 16.

in wisdom!—wherein we are sometimes favoured with the fruition of his love, measurably imparted, to our comfort and unspeakable joy, infinitely superior to all that this world can afford, and which will remain, when *the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up!*†—The grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, will then open unto the soul that glorious prospect of unutterable, inconceivable happiness, which is the provision of GOD for the righteous, and those who faithfully persevere to a peaceful and happy conclusion.

It is by virtue of the grace and love of GOD, that we are enabled to advance in a proper progression through the various steps of a religious life; and which would kindle an ardour of affection in the mind, with desires for a continued supply of that heavenly virtue, which nourishes the soul up unto eternal life.—A want of *this*, makes us bow to the god of this world, and to things that are in it.—The love of money, riches, and the praise of men; which with various powers of seduction are presented to our view, and our prospects are bounded by the narrow conceptions of an earthly mind.—It is a love of those things, which obstructs the progress of religion.—A secret deviation from the love of GOD to a love of this world, has prevailed in many.—But how can it be otherwise, since like will ever assimilate with its like? And while the body is terrestrial, the glory is terrestrial, and the body will continue engaged in the pursuit of earthly things.—For every mind will attend to its similitude.—And *while*

† 2 Pet. iii. 10.

the body is terrestrial, the glory will *retain* terrestrial, however it may assume to matters of a *higher* nature, and superior importance.—Yet while the *glory* is earthly, our *views* earthly, and confined to the pleasures and pursuits of *this* world, our *affections* are earthly, and we are rendered incapable of *that* love, which is of a divine and *heavenly* nature.

A terrestrial love presides and is prevalent in the minds of many; which has obstructed the power of truth, and been the cause of feeble *purposes* and feeble *efforts*, enfeebled *minds* with irresolute *intentions*, and proved the occasion of a defection amongst Christian professors, who have been desirous to form something more amiable and agreeable, or better adapted to their natural inclinations.—But there is a deficiency in their *love*, a wavering in *affection*, a division of love, which is the cause of weakness and incapacity to make a proper advancement in a Christian life, or improvement in the progressive work of religion upon the soul. For, as I have hinted, while the body is terrestrial, the glory is terrestrial, until we are created anew in CHRIST JESUS, unto righteousness; wherein our minds will become clothed with a *celestial* glory, and by the power of divine grace, be set above every earthly love:—And then the love of God will prevail in our minds, and we shall attain an experience of additional strength, steadily to persevere in the arduous warfare of a Christian life. And the glory being celestial, our views are circumscribed within the limits of an *heavenly* love, wherein we are lifted up to God, being renewed in the spirit of our minds, and enabled to travel on towards the glorious city of the saints solemnity.

But

But it is a *deficiency* of love, it is a cleaving to other things, inconsistent with the purity of the divine nature, that has slain ten thousands!—A secret defection of *heart*, which no human eye hath been privy to, has slain more than open prophanity!—A degeneracy of heart, a secret sliding from the covenant of life, in those who are turning aside into the path of irreligion, and a mental deviation from the purity of nature, and holiness; the necessary requisite to an union and divine participation in the love of God.

I think it is said with very great propriety, that *The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some have lusted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*†—But though it may seem to many not needful to tell of these things, methinks it is applicable to some in these days who would be deemed *men of God*; and for whom I wish, as for myself, that when the heavens shall roll back as a scroll, and eternity shall open upon us, when our views of these lower objects shall vanish and disappear, when the arch-angel's trump shall sound to judgment, and a righteous retribution is made, we may be *found men of God*!—But O man of God, that hast *these things* in view, think on the unutterable prospect of infinite happiness, the reward of obedience, and *flee these things*. Flee the glory and splendor of this transient world; continue to follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness; fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

† 1 Tim. vi. 10.

This is the language of the love of God to this assembly, that we may be *sound Men of God*, when all the glory of this world, with its splendor and dependencies, shall come to a conclusion; that when every human aid shall vanish, and no worldly assistance is near, the love of God may cover our spirits in all our trials; that when every human help is totally suspended, we may continue to feel the effects of his mercy and goodness happily to spread in our minds, to their edification and unspeakable joy.—Herein we receive a divine evidence of love, communicated from that boundless source of unutterable grace wherewith he has visited us, in order to *dwell* in our hearts, or that he may *dwell in us richly*.—And thus we are brought to discern the beauty of holiness, the uniformity of love, to open the mind beyond the contracted view of human powers, into the glorious fruition of divine essential love, the love of God, that would thus dwell in our hearts and minds; and then we may witness him to be *with us all, always. Amen.* He will be a light to our paths, and an aid at hand, while we are travelling through the various difficulties and probations in life.—May the shepherd of Israel, *who sleeps not by day, nor slumbers by night*, attend you! and may we place our whole dependence upon him, as our support and all-sufficient strength in every needful time!

And dearly-beloved youth! you that are entering upon the stage of active life, be ever vigilantly concerned to improve the present moments, and that you may build beyond the habitation of sorrow; that all the high places may be removed, and your minds become replenished with true consolation.—And as you are not always to expect one uniform joyous scene,

scene, but clouds of darkness sometimes interrupt the prospects of pleasure, in your pilgrimage through life, prepare your minds, by zealously endeavouring after the love of God; and wait to know, in yourselves, the unspeakable advantage of his heavenly aid and assistance, offered to conduct you through the various scenes of mortality, to the righteous and awful presence of the Judge of heaven and earth; which will continue to sustain you, when no human consolation can afford relief; even when your offences appear as a flood, surrounded with temptation and distress, and you are ready to cry out, *who shall deliver me from the wrath of an offended Creator!* In this state of anxious solicitude, your heavenly Father is mercifully pleased to arise, and administer relief to such, who are thus *hungering and thirsting after righteousness*; and the cup of life and salvation is handed to their comfort, from the glorious Helper, that in his strength you may be enabled to stand unshaken in the troublesome time!—And it is to these he waits to be gracious; a helper at hand, from whom proceeds every power to assist, and every attribute of mercy, kindness, goodness, and adorable condescension, are graciously dispensed to the sons of men, wherein they are established in righteousness and true holiness.

He touches the mountains, and they melt: every obstruction that would hinder the progress or advancement of this divine, essential, efficacious work of redemption upon the soul, must be removed; every unavailing connection must give place to the ties of an ardent and sanctified love.

He

He touches the mountains, and they melt; the everlasting hills, they bow at his presence. In his mercy we experience the removing of those things, that oppose or prevent an increase in the knowledge of God, or of the things appertaining to our everlasting peace; in order that the exercised pilgrim in his progress may receive additional strength, to run with alacrity the race of a Christian life, and finally attain an happy union with the sons of the morning, who sing together for joy.

It is the glorious benefits proceeding from the love of God, which I earnestly intreat that the youth, of all names and distinctions to religion, may carefully seek, and avail yourselves of, that He may be with you through the various steps of a probationary life. And though you may sometimes have to travel in the exercised path of temptation and anxious distress, continue in *hope*, and you will feel his *light* to arise in your hearts, and witness an inward resurrection unto *life*; that life that will never fade, but will remain when every tender and lawful connexion can no longer comfort, but must soon be dissolved, and the sympathy one for another shall be ineffectual to deliver. All the tender connexions in life are but of uncertain duration, and upon them all this inscription is wrote, "They shall shortly perish;" but the Love of God *never fades*:—it is continued from generation to generation, and will remain when time shall be swallowed up in eternity:—It is this wherein we taste of the *goodness* of God, and are made to drink the cup of life and salvation, and have to rejoice in the unspeakable fruition of happiness it affords to the sanctified in heart, who in future time, as well as the present,

present, will have to say, *Spring up, O well, and we will sing unto thee*;—it will remain an enduring portion to the ransomed in Jacob, and to the redeemed in Israel; and will be an excellent comforter in the time of probation and exercise, through the silent steps of anxiety and secret distress, known to none but God and thy own soul.

He knows *all things*, by whose merciful aid we are sustained through *the regions of the shadow of death*, when every unavailing relation or human dependency shall disappear and come to an end. What *then* can sustain us, but the love of God?—It is that which covers the head in the day of battle; and which I would recommend, with a fervent affection, to you who are the hopes of the present age, that you ardently endeavour after the love of God, that will never decrease with age; it enlarges upon the mind, and is increased with an increase of love: it proceeds from the throne of God, and spreads from the threshold of his house: it is continued through the courts of his sanctuary, and reaches to the uttermost part of the earth; and is as a river, *the streams whereof make glad the whole heritage of God*.

All the beauty and splendour of the world will fade; and the excellency of temporal enjoyments, which are the portion of uncertainty, shall shortly know their time and place no more: but the love of God, flowing from Himself, returns upon the sanctified soul as a river that never *passeth by*, proceeding from the inexhaustible Source of Love: it spreads through the various states of mankind, and is diffused throughout the spiritual creation of his
Son,

Son, unlimited as eternity! A degree of which I feel upon my mind for this assembly, with an ardency that cannot be expressed, *that He may be with you all, always. Amen!*—For the love of God, imparted to the sanctified soul, and a portion of the Holy Ghost, and divine approbation in communion, hath been such as *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the good things that God hath in store for them that love Him.*

III. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.

This is the bond that binds, and wherein we are united to God, and know it to be a well springing up unto eternal life.—It is not in external helps, nor in the agreement of words, neither is it in the consent of doctrine, or in fine-spun regular systems, to constitute a *communion of the Holy Ghost*. But it is as we are admitted to a sacred repast in the divine *banqueting house*, (wherein we offer the oblation of worship, a cloud of incense, arising from hearts prepared by the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and in the love of GOD), that we are advanced to a divine communion of the HOLY GHOST. A communion not restrained to any distinction or profession of people, but extended to all such as experience an union and fellowship in spirit, wherein they are sometimes lifted up to the Father of spirits, and enabled to approach Him *in spirit and in truth*; which has often been sealed with the love and approbation of God, in a divine manifestation of his kindness and goodness to men, *who eat that which is good, and delight themselves in fatness*, being renewed

renewed in the spirit of their minds, and enabled to lay hold on eternal life.

In this communion, this unutterable, this inconceivable communion, many have found their *strength to be renewed*, and their hearts engaged in the solemn worship of God, the Author of their Being: a communion inexpressible in its nature!—May those minds, who have attained this happy experience, continue therein in all humility and purity!

It is a communion in *spirit*, wherein the sanctified soul approaches the author of spirits with a sacrifice in spirit, when the sacrifice of words shall fail.—For there is a communion which language cannot *express*! A worship that wants not the aid of *words*! nor is to be defined by an harmony of sounds, in which we approach the sacred author of unutterable love!

When there was *silence in heaven for about the space of half an hour*; when the vocal tribute of *holy, holy, holy*, and the hallelujahs of sanctified spirits in endless felicity were suspended, their *worship* continued in awful, holy, solemn, inconceivable SILENCE! It was a rapturous adoration, too copious for language to express! a cloud of incense, before the throne of immaculate purity and love!—May our minds be gathered to it, let our name or profession to religion be what it may! and may we experience this divine communion of saints, and deeply ponder God's unbounded love, in solemn silence! For there is no power of eloquence can sufficiently acknowledge the obligation and reverence we owe His Infinite Majesty, who fills heaven and earth with his glory and goodness!—

goodness!—But let us look up unto him, and wait to be prepared for it;—for *they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength*;—wherein we may experience a constant advancement from grace to grace, until we attain the glorious end proposed by this lively animating salutation (which I wish for you as for myself) *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, always. Amen.*

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The following Discourse was delivered at Horsleydown, Southwark, London, the 19th of the eleventh Month, 1769.

A Solemn summons, which the Almighty gave through his prophet Joel, to a people whom he had owned above all the families of the earth, at a time when they had revolted and departed from him, has been revived in my mind, with an apprehension that the same authority requires the republication of it in this day, to a people likewise highly favoured of Him, and who have in like manner departed from their first love.

Blow the trumpet in Zim, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet: let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord! and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.†

As I am about to conclude, perhaps finally conclude, my labours among you in this quarter, I would query with some, with many that are present, whether they have not heard intelligibly the sound

† Joel ii. 15, 16, 17, 18.

of the trumpet, calling them with a degree of certainty to arise and prepare themselves for the battle?

My brethren and sisters, among whom I have been constrained in the overflowings of the Father's love to labour in a private capacity, breaking, I hope I may say, a little bread from house to house; the everlasting gospel has been preached among you, with all the force of pathetic energy, with all the tenderness of divine compassion: let it not be ineffectual. The gospel message has been delivered with such indubitable clearness, that your judgments have been convinced; you have assented to the truth as it is in Jesus: suffer not the impression it has made upon your minds to be speedily erased.

Far, very far, be it from me to think highly of myself, to exalt the officer, the minister; I would not that you should hold any man's person in estimation; I am deeply sensible, that to me belongs blushing and confusion of face: but I magnify mine office, and the power of Him who has seen meet to employ me therein. I would endeavour to exalt in your view, the adorable condescension and goodness of the great Author of all our mercies, in that he has caused the trumpet to be renewedly sounded in your borders: hear its important message with suitable attention; let it rouse and prepare all the ranks of the armies of our Israel, to engage in the glorious cause of our God: let the daughter of our Zion arise from the bed of indolence, from the lethargic stupor of a fatal forgetfulness, from all the deadening, benumbing gratifications of sensuality, and shake herself from the dust of the earth, that she may come up to the help of him who hath called her with an high and holy calling.

ing. The trumpet is blown in her streets, and the alarm has been heard by all: Oh! let not its language be rendered unintelligible by the multiplicity of trivial things, that too much absorb the minds of many. I am fully persuaded, that the gracious visitation of humbling melting goodness has been afresh extended to individuals present, in, I had almost said, a very memorable manner; nor will I recall the expression, for if it be not treasured up in your remembrance now for your profit and advantage, it will be memorable in that awful period, when every neglected mercy will appear deeply engraven in a dread hand-writing on the wall against us. Let me, therefore, tenderly entreat you, with all the warmth of unutterable affection, as a brother, as a fellow-pilgrim through the vicissitudes of time, to the unmixed joys of an happy eternity, that you will no longer neglect the offers of mercy, or turn a deaf ear to the reproofs of instruction.

I feel my mind covered with that boundless love, that wishes, that ardently desires, you may, indeed, be wise for yourselves; for although I may be deficient in many qualifications of a gospel minister, I am not wanting in that pure, disinterested love, which seeks not yours, but you unto the LORD.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast.

If we were but enough attentive to the sound of the trumpet, we should see the absolute necessity of this sanctified fast, a fast from every one of these delusive pleasures and slavish attachments, that render the mind insensible of good.

Call

Call a solemn assembly.

This branch of the summons, some may think, belongs only to a few, and we have no share in the duty it enjoins. I confess I am not of that opinion; I think every individual has a share in the instruction couched in it.

Call a solemn assembly. O you active ones! stop a while in your swift career; make a solemn pause; stand collected from every object that can gratify or delight the sensual part; labour diligently to assemble all the powers and faculties of the soul, that they may be sanctified by Him who gave them. I believe there is no useless; dead, inactive member in the church of God; and those who can thus assemble the collected attention of a redeemed mind, devoted to the divine will, those have an undoubted right, from the highest authority, to call a holy convocation.

“We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth,” was the language of some formerly, who had indeed sanctified an acceptable fast. I must desire that those who, perhaps, cannot be so active in promoting this glorious cause among the sons of men, as some who are called into more eminent stations in the church, may by a circumspect care, over all their words and actions, see that they do nothing against the truth.

Call a solemn assembly, gather the people.

How scattered are many of the members of this quarter; scattered indeed, as sheep without a shepherd;

herd; dispersed up and down, in the dark vale of insensibility, and self-forgetfulness; many upon the barren mountains of an empty profession; lost to all religious fellowship; unacquainted with that holy union, in which is the bond of peace. How many are the careless I have met with amongst you, who, alas! it may be said care for none of these things? O, you elders! who might have been as pillars in the LORD's house. You delegated shepherds, who might have adorned the first ranks in the armies of our Israel, if you had not sitten down, and taken up a rest short of those glorious abodes, which are prepared for them who steadily persevere in the line of divine appointment. To you the call is,

Gather the people.

Am I my brother's keeper?† Let it suffice for me that I look to myself, and that my own family is in tolerable order, is a language that too much prevails. But oh! that you had the cause of GOD more at heart; that you were more engaged to gather the people, that you might, with a fatherly care, overlook those whose minds at present resemble the barren desert, the uncultivated wilderness; that you might comfort and encourage those who tread the gloomy scenes of an adverse allotment, as it were cut out from every joy, and alive to every painful sensibility. How would it comfort many of these if an experienced friend was now and then to drop into their families, and at times speak a word in the openings of divine wisdom, suitable to their several states? I believe it would be a great means of gather-

† Gen. iv. 9.

ing the people. Why should your care be circumscribed within the narrow limits of your own families, although they might be well regulated; but you might be more extensively useful if thus engaged in the care of the household of God: I am persuaded that the divine Being would be over you, and a blessing would attend your labours. It is not a time for us to dwell unconcerned in our ceiled houses, when the house of God lies waste. We have many of us the same tender connections as you: I have myself the same endearing attachments as some of you; the same ties of domestic love, as some of you; not less attentive to every relative and social duty, than some of you: my nature is not harsh; my principles much less so; yet I am made willing to leave all to come and labour with you, if so be I might be instrumental to rouse any to a more arduous pursuit of their everlasting interest: and I can freely acknowledge with humble thankfulness, that I never more fully experienced my peace to flow as a river, never could with greater joy say, *Return, O my soul! to the place of thy rest; for the Lord thy God hath dealt bountifully with thee,** than when I have been thus engaged in extensive private labours, visiting the sick, reviving the sorrowful, encouraging the disconsolate, strengthening the weak, watching over and carefully admonishing the giddy, uncautious youth: and I doubt not but you would have the words of peace in your own bosoms, if, as heads of the society, you were more often thus employed in endeavouring to gather the people.

Sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders.

* Psalm cxvi. 7.

have

I have been deeply concerned to see some of the elders so deficient in filling the line of divine appointment : if they were more engaged to assemble under the holy influence of that power in which they should move, they would many of them be commanded to

Blow the trumpet in Zion.

But I know of no state harder to speak to, more difficult to reach, than that of an elder, whose mind is overgrown by the earthly nature.

*O earth, earth, earth! hear the word of the Lord.**

I do not recollect any other instance, in sacred writ, where attention is demanded in a similar manner. *O earth, earth, earth!* thus thrice repeated, plainly signifying the great difficulty there is, in reaching to those, who, as it were, are buried in earth, whose minds are fixed in it.

Gather the children.

You that have the rising youth under your care, let me call upon you, let me intreat you to—*gather the children.* Gather them from all the bewitching, enticing allurements of the world ; gather their attention to that of God in their own minds. O, how have I secretly mourned to see the poor children so sorrowfully neglected, so uninstructed, so much estranged from that holy, divine principle, which would exceedingly beautify and enrich them ! but, alas ! how few parents are rightly qualified to teach

* Jer. xxii. 29.

their

their children the law of divine love, to instill into their tender minds proper sentiments, to cultivate upon them those impressions that would be of everlasting advantage; and if the children, when the gracious visitation of the Father of mercies moves upon their hearts, warming and animating them with the love of virtue, raising the secret sigh, and begetting desires after heaven and holiness: I say, if the children should then ask the negligent parents, what is this secret something which I feel; this principle which impresses my mind with the love of virtue? what is it, what value shall I set upon it? How then can you give them suitable instruction? You cannot teach them obedience to its sacred dictates, when your example speaks a language quite opposite. O, why should the sea-monster be brought against you? *The sea-monster draweth forth the breast to the young, but the daughter of my people is become cruel, as the ostrich in the wilderness, that leaveth her eggs in the sand, to be hatched by the beams of the sun, and considereth not that the foot of the passenger may crush them.*† The daughter of my people hath left her tender offspring to the uncertainty of being accidentally benefited, or, I should rather say, to the mercy of God, unasked, unsought, exposed to all the dangers of a dreary wilderness. unaided, unassisted by the care of a natural parent; *the tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the children ask bread, and there is none, in many families to break it;** they want to be nourished by the sincere milk of the word: but, alas!

The daughter of my people is become cruel. . . .

* † Lam. iv. 3.—* Ibid. iv. 4.

O, you

O, you parents! ye delegated shepherds! what account will you have to give when the Lord of the whole earth ariseth to make inquisition for blood? Bear with me, my dear friends; flattery and smooth tales may please fools, but they will not please Him, whom I desire to serve in the gospel of his Son. All that is within me is moved while I thus earnestly expostulate with you, on the behalf of the dear children; suffer me to entreat you for God's sake, for your own soul's sake, and for the sake of the cause of truth,

Gather the children, and those that suck the breasts.

Those who are filling themselves with the world's consolations, with the intoxicating pleasures and amusements of a degenerate age; wean them from these delights, gather them to the knowledge of themselves, to a sense of the mercies that are offered them, by the great Author of mercies, ancient and new.

While thy servant was busied hither and thither, the man made his escape,—was the vain excuse of the officer, to whose custody a certain captive was committed, with the charge, *Take care of this man till I come, and if thou let him go, thy life shall go for his life.* † No plea of other engagements, nor even want of ability to discharge our duty towards our offspring, will stand us in stead, if, when the Almighty queries with us, “What hast thou done with those lambs I left under thy care in the wilderness, those tender offspring I gave thee in charge?” We have, through

† 1 Kings xx. 39, 40.

neglect,

neglect, through unwatchfulness, suffered him or her to go, but we shall most certainly stand accountable for his or her life. I said want of ability, because I assuredly believe, that want of ability will be so far from a palliation of our crime, that it will rather increase our condemnation. Can we plead want of ability to him, who is always ready to furnish us with it, if we are but willing to receive it at his hand? I am of opinion, with respect to many of our youth, that if they had been properly instructed, and carefully watched over; if they could have seen the beauty of holiness shine in the example of their parents, they would not have gone out so widely as they have. O, you parents of both sexes! an important duty is required of you. Example your children in the practice of piety. Example speaks louder than precept; its influence is far more extensive; and while on the one hand, you are excited to a faithful discharge of your duty towards them, by the certain hope of a glorious reward; so on the other hand, the powerful ties of natural affection, the warm solicitude for the happiness of those you love, must stir you up to diligence in the work and service appointed you.

Gather the children.

If, after your attentive care has been employed for their preservation; if, after the forcible voice of example, you have called them to the perfecting of holiness in the fear of God, they will go, they will turn aside, into the bye-ways and crooked paths of sin and iniquity; they must stand by their own choice. You will have redeemed your own souls, and will be found in your lots at the end of time.

A pon-

A ponderous crown awaits ; you will close your eyes, and open them to the boundless fruition of unmixed joy, in a happy eternity.

We do sometimes with sorrow observe the unwearied labours of a parent's love, bestowed without the desired effect : it is mournful to see children pierce with bitterness and anxiety the breast that has been their support in their infantile years ; to fill that eye with sorrow that has dropt over them the tear of maternal tenderness : it is a cruel thing for a child to mingle gall and wormwood in the cup of a parent descending to the grave ! Let such be assured that their own portion of gall and wormwood will be doubly increased thereby, in the solemn hour of just retribution.

But, O, beloved youth ! I earnestly desire that you may never thus widely deviate from the paths of rectitude. It is on you the hopes of the present age must shortly devolve ; may you wisely chuse an early submission to the holy discipline of the cross of CHRIST, that you may come up as an army for God. Consider the uncertainty of thy stay here : consider the important business of life, and let the love of every unprofitable delight be swallowed up in the arduous pursuit of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life.

We are daily instructed by the powerful, eloquent language of mortality. Death invades all ranks, snatches those of all ages from the busy stage of life. She who was yesterday surrounded with nuptial joys, must to-morrow be confined within the cold enclosure of the silent grave.

Let

Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

Let the young be joyous, and those who are in the bloom of life leave every thing which tends to retard their progress towards the city of the saints solemnity: let them relinquish their most exalted satisfactions, rather than neglect to lay hold on the joys of God's salvation, which are unutterably more desirable than all the sin-pleasing gratifications that this world can bestow.

Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar.

This should not be confined to those only whose mouths may be opened publicly amongst you; for it belongs to all those who preach to others by the regularity of a godly life and conversation. Although we are favoured with a living ministry of divine appointment, who dare not fill the ears of men with a repetition of unselt truths, nor amuse them with the unprofitable productions of an empty mind, but are concerned to discharge themselves faithfully, as stewards of the mysteries of God; yet let them be joined by all those that mourn for the desolation of Zion, by all who wish peace within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces.

Let us weep between the porch and the altar, saying, *Spare thy people, O Lord! and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?*

If we were thus unitedly engaged, in the behalf of our Israel, it may be that the LORD will again be jealous over his land, with an holy jealousy; for I cannot think that a people whom he has raised by his invincible power, and so signally placed his name amongst, were ever designed to be only the transient glory of a couple of centuries. I am still revived by a secret hope of better times, when our Zion shall again put on her beautiful garments, and in her, and with her, shall arise *judges as at the first, and counsellors as at the beginning.* † Let us weep between the porch and the altar; let us intercede for the people, that the land may yet be spared.

The gracious ear of our heavenly Father is still open to the supplications of his children, and I believe he will yet be jealous over his land, and pity his people.

The time approaches when the great dasher in pieces will more and more come up amongst us; and may all, who are broken by him, wait to be healed by the arising of his love: I shall not live to see it, but I live in the faith, and I believe I shall die in the faith, that the Lord of Hosts will yet beautify the place of his feet, that our Zion will yet become an eternal excellency, and Jerusalem the praise of the whole earth.

Let us weep between the porch and the altar; for the LORD will yet be jealous over his land, and pity his people. The bowels of adorable condescension

† Ifai. i. 26.

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yet

yet yearn over his children, with all the tenderness of a father's love !

*How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? How shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim? How shall I cast thee off from being a people before me? ** By this moving and pathetic language would the great Father of the universe induce you to return to the arms of everlasting mercy; and if we, who are placed as watchmen in Zion, faithfully discharge the trust reposed in us, we shall be made instrumental in gathering the scattered and dispersed sheep, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, to the great Shepherd, to the one sheepfold, and finally obtain an admittance into those glorious mansions, where the morning stars join in singing hallelujahs ! and where the sons of God for ever shout for joy.†

Now unto the King, eternal, immortal, and invincible, the only God, be honour and praise for ever and ever.

* Hosea xi. 8.—† Job xxxviii. 7.

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